SHADOWRUN 7325

MISSIONS™

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MISSIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Missions is a collection of roleplaying adventures set in the Awakened world of **Shadowrun.**

The year is 2058. Advances in technology are astonishing, with humans able to blend with computers and travel through the electronic netherworld of data known as the Matrix. Even more astonishing is the return of magic. Elves, dwarfs, dragons, orks and trolls have reassumed their true forms, while megacorporations (rather than superpowers) rule much of the world. Moving through this world like hushed whispers in the night are the shadowrunners. No one admits their existence, but no one else can do their secret work.

Meanwhile, the world moves ahead. Governments and their agents function in their own secret ways. The police try to protect and serve. Media hounds bring to light the injustices that spread like a cancer in the twenty-first century. People need to be rescued ... and that's your job.

GAMEMASTERING NOTES

Missions is significantly different from the standard **Shadowrun** adventure set. The four adventures presented here are based on **Alternate Campaign Concepts,** beginning on page 110 of **The Shadowrun Companion: Beyond the Shadows.**

Each adventure allows the players to play characters who are not shadowrunners, though they can still play a runner team if they so desire. In **Under the Influence,** the characters play Lone Star detectives searching for a state-of-the-cyberart street gang. **Malpractice** has the player characters working for DocWagon as security attached to an EMT team. In **Mission: Mars,** the player characters work for either AresSpace security or as a media team, seeking the long-buried truth behind the Mars photos released in Dunkelzahn's will (**Portfolio of a Dragon: Dunkelzahn's Secrets**). Finally, in **King of the Mountain** the player characters are a UCAS military Special Forces team assigned to infiltrate a mountain fortress in which a madman has set up a secret training base for a fanatical magical army.

Each adventure expands on the Alternate Campaign Concept rules for gear, weapons, skills and training required to play characters in different types of campaigns. **Missions** also includes rules for basing campaigns on each adventure.

The adventures in **Missions** combine decision-tree and linear story formats. In each adventure, the player characters may arrive at different locations in the story via different paths, or follow one event in the story directly into the next. The gamemaster should think of each adventure as the bare-bones plot and should feel free to make any changes necessary to flesh it out and give his players more choices. To aid the gamemaster in this task, the individual sections of each adventure include suggestions for gamemastering the various situations that may arise. **Missions** is designed for a team of four to six players with a wide variety of talents.

SHADOWRUN RULES

To run **Missions,** the gamemaster needs a thorough familiarity with the material in this book, as well as a working knowledge of the **Shadowrun, Second Edition (SRII)** rules and **The Shadowrun Companion: Beyond the Shadows** (**SRComp**). The gamemaster should also be familiar with the expanded magic rules in the **Grimoire, Second Edition (Grimoire II)**, and the revised Matrix rules of **Virtual Realities 2.0 (VR2)**. Aside from the fictional prologues that begin each adventure, all the information contained in **Missions** is for the gamemaster's eyes only.

All specific information, particularly game statistics, appears in **SRII** format. Gamemasters still using the first-edition **Shadowrun** rules will need to make a few adjustments to non-player character, weapon and spell statistics.

MAKING SUCCESS TESTS

During the course of **Missions**, the players will make a number of Success Tests using a skill and a given target number. These Success Tests are indicated by the name of the skill, followed by the target number in parentheses. For example, a Sorcery (5) Test refers to a Sorcery Success Test against a Target Number of 5.

SUCCESS TABLES

At times, the gamemaster will use success tables to determine how much information the players receive from inquiries and investigations. Each success table lists different information obtained for differing numbers of die roll successes. Rolling a higher number of successes always reveals the information for the lower numbers of successes as well. For example, a character rolling 3 successes would learn the information for 3 successes, and also the information for 1 and 2 successes.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Aside from the **SRII** rules and those in the sourcebooks listed above, this book includes all the information needed to run **Missions.** The gamemaster should read through each adventure before attempting to run it. Some important plot developments do not become apparent until well into each adventure, but the gamemaster must lay the groundwork for these developments early on. He or she can only accomplish that by being familiar with each story line.

Though **Missions** as written tries to cover all the likely and even some of the unlikely ideas that the players might come up with, it is impossible to foresee every possible action the players might choose to take. Therefore, the gamemaster must be prepared to improvise if necessary.

Each adventure begins with a fictional prologue. The prologue gives the gamemaster a feel for the setting of the adventure. The **Introduction** following the prologue explains the nature and specific background of each adventure. The sections within

each adventure follow standard **Shadowrun** format. Most of them contain four parts: **Tell It to Them Straight, Hooks, Behind the Scenes** and **Debugging.**

Tell It to Them Straight is read aloud to the players. It describes where the player characters are and what is happening to them as though they were actually there. Depending on the player characters' previous choices and/or the point in the adventure at which the encounter occurs, the gamemaster may need to adapt the text to suit the situation.

The second section, **Hooks,** gives the gamemaster hints and tips about imagery to use in the scene, emotions to convey, sounds, sensations, textures and so on. The information provided in this section varies in form and content from scene to scene, ranging from general themes to specific emotions.

The next section, **Behind the Scenes,** tells the gamemaster what is really happening in each encounter and proposes a potential sequence of events. Any maps needed to play an encounter are included in this section. Information the players can discover and possible consequences of the player characters' actions also appear here. Non-player character statistics needed to roleplay the encounter are usually included here as well. This section may also contain hints and suggestions for handling a particular encounter.

The final section of each encounter, **Debugging,** offers suggestions for getting the story back on track if things go too far wrong; for example, if the player characters overlook a vital piece of data or if half the team meets an untimely death. The gamemaster need not use any of the suggestions given in this section; if he or she has a better method of redirecting the game, he should feel free to use it. As always, the gamemaster may also let the chips fall where they may.

At the end of each adventure, **Picking Up the Pieces** provides tips on wrapping up the adventure and awarding Karma, as well as offering suggestions for answering unresolved questions.

PREPARING THE ADVENTURES

It is impossible to create a published adventure that provides the appropriate opposition level for every group of player characters. Some groups are inherently more powerful than others.

The gamemaster must adjust the game statistics and capabilities of the opposition to provide an appropriate level of difficulty for his or her group. If an adventure does not suit the player characters' strengths and weaknesses, the gamemaster may use the published version as an outline to develop an adventure of his or her own. Or, if it works well except for a quirk here and there, the gamemaster can change any part of the plot and story events to make the adventure a better one for the players.

Each adventure suggests Threat and Professional Ratings for each of the NPCs. As explained in **Shadowrun, Second Edition,** use Threat Rating dice in place of Dice Pools for these characters (p. 187, **SRII**). Gamemasters should adjust the actual Threat Ratings to better reflect the level of opposition presented by the player characters, especially in those adventures where maintaining game balance promises to be exceptionally tricky. The gamemaster should feel free to modify Threat Rating dice on the fly during an encounter to provide the proper level of opposition. To that end, the text occasionally includes notes on how tough the player characters should find a battle or encounter.

The gamemaster will find such manipulation crucial to keeping some of the encounters at a manageable level. The fights in **Missions** work best when choreographed like an action movie. Though lead and magic flies everywhere, only a few of the bad guys actually get a clean shot at the heroes at any one time. That limitation, and the application of the **SRII** Professional Rating rules, should help keep large-scale fights under control.

The Professional Rating system works as follows. Non-player characters with a Professional Rating of 1 will withdraw from a fight after taking a Light wound, those rated at 2 will withdraw after taking a Moderate wound, those rated at 3 after a Serious wound, and those rated at 4 will fight until unconscious or dead.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

SHOOTING STAR: A PROLOGUE

Tanner was in a dark place. A spotlight shone from above on the featureless wooden floor, but everything around him was dark. He wasn't sure how he had gotten here; he remembered something about a doctor, a street gang—a case. He was on a case, investigating something. He reached for his belt and felt nothing. Hadn't he been carrying a gun? He remembered having a gun …

"Atira!"

The word came from somewhere behind him. It sounded like an order, but he didn't know what it meant.

Something flew at him out of the darkness—a huge, bat-like shape with gleaming claws and yellow teeth, a glittering-eyed monster thirsty for blood. A sudden weight at his belt told him that his gun was back. Instinctively, he drew and fired. The Thunderbolt's roar deafened him—the black bat-thing screeched and veered away, spattering him with its blood. The monster disappeared into the impenetrable darkness, leaving Tanner alone with his gun and his questions.

He looked down at the Thunderbolt. It looked like his standard-issue sidearm. *But I wasn't packing a Thunder.* Memories stirred uneasily. *I was undercover. I had a Browning. Why can't I remember what happened?*

Abruptly, the Thunderbolt vanished from his hands. His belt holster was full again.

"Atira!" the voice barked again. Deep in the darkness, something moved.

Tanner grabbed frantically for his gun—a pistol—and drew. He peered at the surrounding shadows, straining his eyes in a futile effort to spot whatever lay outside the tiny circle of light. Another hideous bat-creature—or the same one?—soared silently toward him, its fanged mouth spread wide. He pulled the trigger twice. The Ultra-Power rocked in his hand as the bullets thudded into the creature's body. It dropped away and vanished into the inky blackness.

How many of those things are out there? The Ultra-Power held only ten rounds, and two were already gone. How long could he hold out? He would have to rely on single shots, conserve ammo and hope.

Once again, his gun went from his hands to the holster. As if the shout of *"Atira!"* were his cue, he drew and fired, this time almost before the shadow-monster was visible. The creature uttered a grating shriek and vanished. Tanner glanced down at the pistols ammo readout; nine rounds. *Nine? Why not seven?*

Again, the Ultra-Power vanished.

"Atira!"

Something flew at him, and he drew the gun from his belt …

Marcus Powell stepped into the viewing room and watched through the one-way window as Frank Tanner's body twitched and jerked against the bed's restraints. The combined medical and simsense systems pinged and beeped incessantly; their readouts measured every conceivable bodily function. The science, however, meant nothing to Powell. He wanted results. He turned to the small Amazonian man whose job it was to provide them. "How are we doing, Doctor?"

Claudio "Dr. Cuca" Andrade looked up from the window and smiled broadly. His white teeth gleamed against his brown skin. *"Bem,* Mr. Powell. The new medications are keeping the dissociative stress well under control, so we can condition the subject much more quickly. We have already fully implemented several commands, and it has taken … " He glanced at his mechanical wristwatch, an oddly old-fashioned conceit for a man who lived on the cutting edge. "Not quite four hours. These drugs are a significant improvement to the procedure."

"Good." Powell glanced back at the unconscious Tanner. Tanner's head was jerking from side to side, his eyes flickering back and forth under closed lids. "Dr. Rampart suggested that they might reduce the real-world effectiveness of the conditioning."

"Não." Andrade shook his head. "Not at all. Rampart based that theory on one outdated drug-interaction report that—"

Powell cut him off. "I don't care. I want him tested before he leaves this facility. We can't afford any frag-ups now, understand?"

"Tá bem, Mr. Powell. You will have your test." Andrade glanced at the monitoring system. "Come back in twelve hours; he should have a sufficient command vocabulary by then."

After what seemed like years in darkness, Tanner opened his eyes to light—not the stark spotlight and glittering eyes that had haunted his dreams, but the bright lights of the clinic's recovery room. Shaking his head to banish the remnants of his weird nightmares, he reached up and touched the softlink behind his right ear. Four slots now, not two; the surgery had gone without a hitch, but he hadn't caught a hint of any association with the Futuremen. Small talk with the two other patients he'd seen suggested that they knew nothing about the gang; the doctor himself apparently hadn't even heard of the Futuremen. Another dead end to report to the Star, not to mention a big whack of cred gone from his expense account. Still, it hadn't been a total loss; he'd wanted the softlink upgrade for a while.

A petite elven woman came in with a tray. The sight of her lifted Tanner's spirits immensely; not because she was pretty, but because the tray held his Browning Ultra-Power and other gear, all

apparently unharmed. The street clinic's "nurse" smiled warmly as she deposited the tray by his bed. "Dr. Cuca says you can head out whenever you feel up to it; the operation went smoothly, and the new link tests out just fine. Anything else you need?"

He sat up on the bed and began checking over his possessions, reflexively making sure nothing had been tampered with. "No, I think this'll do it, thanks."

"Fine," she answered. "Just let me know when you're ready to check out." She walked toward the door; the sway of her hips brought an appreciative smile to Tanner's face. Just before she reached the doorway, Tanner heard a strangely familiar word from somewhere over his shoulder: *"Atira!"*

Without thinking, he snatched his pistol off the tray, aimed it at the nurse's back, and pulled the trigger.

Click. The hammer fell on an empty chamber. The elf left the room without seeming to notice. Tanner sat on the bed for a long moment, pistol trained on the closed door. *Well, of* course *they wouldn't give it to you loaded,* part of his brain said. *Now move your hoop and get back to work; you've got a gang to catch.*

Tanner loaded his gun, got up and started getting dressed. That he had almost shot an unarmed woman never crossed his mind.

Doctor Andrade leaned back from the radio microphone and gestured to the viewing window with a satisfied smile. "You see, *Senhor* Powell? The active conditioning was fully effective, and he never realized what he did. It's perfect. And that's only a simple command; we can also induce complex behaviors with this method."

Powell allowed himself a tight smile. "Very good, doctor. Make those modifications part of the standard procedure." He turned to leave the observation room, then turned back to the grinning Amazonian. "What would have happened if he'd loaded the gun first? If he'd actually killed her?"

"Well, he would see the body, of course, and his weapon would obviously show signs of having been fired. He might suspect that he had shot her, but he would have no recollection of doing it and no sense of lost time. Before long, he would forget that his gun had been fired, and he might even forget seeing her body. Anything associated with the command simply fades from memory over twenty-four hours or so." Andrade's smile widened. "Perfect, isn't it?"

"Beautiful." Powell stared through the one-way glass at Tanner, who was calmly lacing up his boots. "Just beautiful."

INTRODUCTION

In **Under the Influence**, the players assume the roles of Lone Star detectives searching for Sergeant Franco Tanner, a Star undercover operative who disappeared while investigating a heavily cybered street gang. Tanner turns up before long, but the player characters' mission is far from over. They soon find out that the street gang is the least of their worries—staying alive long enough to expose the masterminds behind the gang presents a far greater challenge.

Sergeant Tanner was on the trail of a dangerous new street gang, known as the Futuremen, which recently has begun operating in downtown Seattle. Though few in number, the Futuremen are more dangerous than most Seattle gangs. Most of their members pack a surprising amount of cutting-edge cybertechnology, and the gang is also unusually well-organized and disciplined. Rather than indulging in the random violence and looting common to most gangs, the Futuremen strike with almost military precision, accomplish their objectives and then seemingly vanish into thin air.

No one has yet managed to track the gang members after one of their strikes, and investigations have so far turned up no leads about the gang's goals, location or history. Stymied, Lone Star decided to make use of Sgt. Tanner's undercover expertise. But after a month or so of work, Tanner's only significant progress was the identification of several illegal body shops which apparently performed most of the gang's cybersurgery. One particular chop shop, run by an Amazonian expatriate with the street name of "Dr. Cuca," looked like a promising lead; Tanner's sources suggested that most known and suspected Futuremen had used the good doctor's services at one time or another. With nothing else to go on, Tanner decided to put his own body on the line. He approached Cuca about an off-the-record softlink upgrade, in the hope that he might encounter a Futureman or someone who knew more about them during his time at the clinic.

Unfortunately for Tanner, Cuca is more than the gang's pet medico. He is part of the experimental Renraku project that created the Futuremen in the first place. The "street gang" is actually a collection of shadowrunners, gangers and other assorted street types who chose to pick up some hot new cyberware on discount at Cuca's clinic. During surgery, Cuca and his staff implanted a little something extra in their "patients"—an experimental behavior-control device, activated by voice commands from a subdermal radio receiver. This device, combined with extensive simsense conditioning during the patient's recovery period, effectively "programmed" each patient to respond to appropriate voice commands—and then forget about them afterward. The end result: a "gang" of heavily cybered individuals who could be gathered together at a moment's notice, obey commands perfectly and disperse after achieving their objective with no recollection of what they had done or who had done it with them.

In the process of investigating the Futuremen, Tanner unwittingly became one of them—and then promptly returned to his investigation with no knowledge of what had happened. As the player characters begin tracking Tanner, his new masters at Renraku quickly learn that he is a Lone Star agent and begin using him as a deadly tool against his co-workers.

Under the Influence is a non-linear adventure. Depending on the characters' actions, they may discover certain things at different times, provoke NPCs into different actions, and otherwise seriously affect the flow of the adventure. Before running **Under the Influence**, the gamemaster must read the entire adventure and understand the motivations of the main characters, so that he or she can adapt the adventure to any actions the players take.

GETTING STARTED

Most existing **Shadowrun** campaigns feature shadowrunners as player characters—just the sort of lawbreaking scum that Lone Star cops detest. So getting your players to operate on the side of the law requires a slightly different approach than the typical shadowrun.

Players and gamemasters who wish to enjoy **Under the Influence** as a one-shot adventure can use the standard **Shadowrun** rules found in the **Shadowrun Companion** to create Lone Star characters. You may wish to give the players some Good Karma to spend, because they may find their characters are somewhat less powerful than the characters they usually play. Most of the player characters should be members of the Star's Division of Investigation, most likely the Department of Special Investigation or the Department of Organized Crime; one or two might also be mages on loan from the Division of Paranormal Investigation. Pull the characters together, assign them to the case and set them loose.

If your group is already playing a Lone Star-based campaign, you will need to fit their existing characters into this adventure. Characters from the Division of Investigation can easily be assigned to the case. For players whose characters belong to other departments, such as the Tactical Division, the gamemaster can order a "temporary reallocation of assets" to assign the characters to this mission. A group of players portraying a SWAT team, for example, might be given the case because of the high-risk factor presented by such a heavily armed gang.

If your players have little or no interest in playing Lone Star officers, encourage them to give it a try anyway—after all, variety is the spice of life. However, if they still refuse, this adventure can be easily modified for a group of runners. Simply have Lone Star decide to hire outside investigators (the runners, of course) to work the case, based on the premise that its own investigators have been unable to crack it.

In this case, the runners receive the Registered Equipment Edge (p. 34, **Shadowrun Companion**), six months' worth of DocWagon Platinum protection, SINs, and enough fake IDs to last a lifetime (manufactured by Lone Star itself).

However you get your players involved, the group should include at least one magician character; a decker is also useful, but not essential.

Under the Influence is set in Seattle but can easily be moved to another city. If the city in question does not contract its security services out to Lone Star, replace all references to the Star with the name of an appropriate security company or the local police department.

PLAYING THE BOYS IN BLUE

Playing a Lone Star character takes a bit of a different mindset than playing a runner. In most cases, Lone Star cops are trying to make the streets somewhat safer, and they view runners as their biggest problem—simply because runners operate outside the law. On another level, most cops are frustrated because they realize that the real lawbreakers—the megacorps—are just too big and politically connected for them to touch. Therefore, they lean hard on the megacorps' "hired help"—shadowrunners.

Generally, Star cops are tougher than the average beat cop and more savvy than corporate security personnel. Unlike most corp security personnel, undercover Lone Star officers prefer to study their suspects and bring them in alive for questioning, rather than simply killing them where they stand. And after years of interrogating runners, street punks, hitmen and other assorted lawbreakers, most Star operatives develop an excellent sense of how runners think.

To reflect these factors, all player characters in the adventure should have Street Etiquette, as well as whatever type of Etiquette the gamemaster deems appropriate for internal Lone Star communications. Additionally, each player character should have at least 1 contact on the streets.

Lone Star strives to keep its officers relatively free of the weird behavioral problems that heavy Essence loss can cause. Therefore, Lone Star regulations prohibit Star personnel from possessing cyberware that causes more than 3 points of Essence loss. Additionally, player characters are restricted to alpha-grade and normal cyberware, because a cop's salary simply won't pay for beta- or delta-grade equipment. Cybered eyes, ears and smartlinks are the most common cyberware items among Star personnel.

If you are using the priority system to create new characters, use the standard Metahuman priority. The player characters are members of the Star's specialized undercover divisions, which contain more metahumans than most Lone Star divisions.

Every Lone Star officer carries a handgun, so each player character may select a single handgun of any size as his or her standard-issue weapon. Lone Star also supplies every officer with a DocWagon Platinum contract and some type of communication system—headware for mundanes, external systems for magicians. Additionally, each player character's fingerprints, retinal patterns, DNA samples, psychological profile and personal history are registered in the Lone Star databanks.

The player characters are employees rather than shadowrunners in this adventure, so each character receives a salary that supports a Middle lifestyle. Typically, Star personnel draw their salaries from timed-account systems.

Any player character who wants to have a family must take the Dependent Flaw (p. 31, **Shadowrun Companion.**)

For more suggestions on creating and playing law-enforcement characters, see **I Am the Law** on page 117 of the **Shadowrun Companion.**

VANISHING ACT

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Captain Burns looks unhappy today. He always looks unhappy, but today he looks even more unhappy than usual. The fact that he's called you into his office on this particularly unhappy morning leads you to suspect that whatever he has to say will make *you* unhappy.

He motions for all of you to sit down—even though there are only two chairs in the office, and he's sitting in one of them. He looks you over for a long moment before opening his mouth.

"I don't know if all of you know Sergeant Franco Tanner," he says, swiveling his telecom monitor to face you, "but take a close look." The name and face, are vaguely familiar; well-tanned skin, curly black hair, pointy little beard. Now you remember; Tanner's an undercover agent, and you haven't seen him around for several weeks.

"Tanner's been working undercover with the Department of Organized Crime, trying to trace a street gang—the Futuremen," Burns says. That name rings a bell; the Futuremen are the ones all the trid stations have been screaming bloody murder about, calling them the new "downtown terrorists" and pitching a fit over the Star's inability to track them down. So Tanner was one of the lucky fraggers assigned to that mess; now it looks like you're joining him.

"He was trying to get a lead on their whereabouts—in the last report we got from him, he said he was investigating a body shop in Ravenna. That was three days ago. Now he's more than twenty-four hours overdue for his latest report. I want you to find out where he is, what happened to him, and what he's learned about the Futuremen."

Burns looks at each of you. His sour expression tells you there's more to come. "Let me just point out that the company takes this gang situation seriously—very seriously. The media are chewing Chief Herthel a new one over this. Best possible scenario, Tanner is about to break the case and can't risk contacting us because he doesn't want to break cover. That would be great. Good. Wonderful. Anything else could turn into a major frag-up. If he doesn't have any progress to report, it looks like we're just slotting around; if he's gotten caught, we've wasted six weeks of effort; if he's dead, we can add 'Cop Killers Strike Again' to every front-page headline about the Futuremen from now on. So do whatever you have to—but find him and keep his cover secure if it's not already blown."

Burns pulls his monitor back toward himself and looks up at you. "I've loaded all the data we have on the gang onto your terminals, along with a file on Tanner's undercover ID and some undercover IDs for you to use if necessary. If he's still on the case, I don't want his cover blown unless his life is in danger, so play it careful." He takes a final, deep breath. "You got any questions, ask each other. But do it on the way out of here, okay?" With a final, pointed glance at the door, he begins tapping keys on the telecom. You get the feeling the briefing is over.

HOOKS

This scene tells the characters about the major players in the adventure, Tanner and the Futuremen. Captain Burns is a typical TV-show police captain; he's worried about his people and wants the job done right, but he also doesn't want to blow his career by screwing up the big case that got dropped in his lap. Something about this case bothers him, but he's trying to treat it like any other case for as long as he can in the hope that he's wrong.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The players will most likely start by investigating the files on their desktop data terminals. These files contain hundreds of megapulses of eyewitness reports, crime-scene photos, evidence analysis, newsfax stories, predictions, speculations, and guesses and rumors about the gang, all of which can be boiled down to the information in the following paragraphs. (If the players ask for any additional information that would logically be in the files, feel free to make something up based on your knowledge of the Futuremen and the rest of the adventure.)

INFORMATION SUMMARY

The Futuremen got their name from a Lone Star officer who described the perpetrators of a particularly well-executed smash-and-grab as "the street gang of the future." A nearby media snoop overheard the remark, and the screamsheets immediately dubbed the gang the Futuremen. The Futuremen have struck a dozen times in the past two months, pulling off everything from smash-and grab sprees at strip malls to a bloody raid on an Ares-owned warehouse. The targets seem to be chosen at random; so far, no Lone Star officer or computer program has found any pattern in the gang's activities. (In fact, the first Futuremen operation was a simple field test of the gangers' conditioning. The rest of the gang's missions have been additional tests, but all of the targets also just happened to be owned by Renraku's rival Big Eight megacorps—Renraku sees small degrees of harm done to the competition as a bonus. Because no other corp has gotten hit more than twice, they view the attacks as random gang violence rather than planned raids.)

The gangers conducted each operation with precise timing and excellent coordination—which is somewhat odd, because none of the surviving bystanders reported hearing any gang members speak aloud to each other. Once they had what they came for, the gang retreated in good order, hampering pursuit by splitting up and dispersing in all directions. The gangers were also equipped with a wide variety of weapons and cutting-edge cyberware—everything from cyberarm shotguns to what sounds like a move-by-wire system. In fact, the eyewitness reports make the Futuremen sound more like a corporate ops team or a pack of top-gun shadowrunners than the usual two-bit street gang. The gang's vehicles are wildly diverse; various witnesses reported seeing several motorcycles and a van or two, and some gangers apparently traveled on foot. None of the witnesses saw any sign of magical support in the gang.

The gang apparently has only about twenty members but has been wildly successful despite its low numbers. None of the Futuremen have been captured alive; once the authorities show, the gangers run rather than fight if they can. On the few occasions when individual Futuremen couldn't run, they fought so hard when cornered that they ended up dead. One mortally wounded ganger survived just long enough for a few minutes of on-the-spot interrogation, but he was delirious and provided no useful information. A few gang members have been tentatively identified from witness descriptions and security camera footage, but extensive questioning and surveillance of the suspects turned up no evidence that they actually were Futuremen. (Members of the gang do not remember any of their activities with the Futuremen, and those few questioned by Lone Star were not called on for any further gang operations.) All in all, the logs on the gang are a frustrating collection of unknowns and "insufficient data available" notes.

Transcripts of Tanner's reports suggest that he found his early investigations just as frustrating. He assumed the identity of Frank "Leopard" Leonard, thug-for-hire, an alter ego he'd been developing for several years in Seattle's shadows. Through a wide web of street contacts, some aware of his true identity and some not, he began putting out feelers on the Futuremen while pretending to be interested in joining the gang. Most of his contacts knew of the gang, but none could tell him how to find them or where they might hang out.

Tanner next checked Lone Star records to determine the identities of those few gang members who had been killed and posthumously identified. Then he began ingratiating himself with their known contacts. None of these contacts seemed to know anything about the gang; most claimed they never knew that the deceased was involved with the Futuremen until his/her death. However, a series of comments pointed Tanner to one common thread—an illegal cyberclinic in Ravenna, run by a man known as "Dr. Cuca." Apparently, Cuca had performed surgery on many of the dead gangers within the past few months, and a little more research showed Tanner that some of the still-living suspected gangers had also been the doctor's patients.

Tanner's last report, time-stamped thirty hours before the player characters' briefing, indicated that he had located Cuca's clinic beneath a music store that serves as its front. He said he was going on-site to investigate it further. The report includes the chop shop's address, as well as the address of the hotel where Tanner, as Leopard, was staying. The player characters should begin their search at one of these locations.

The characters' undercover IDs are fairly detailed, and the Division of Matrix Security's work should hold up against all but the most intensive background checks. Allow the players to make up details about their characters' alter egos as necessary; the Star always tries to provide undercover IDs that its officers are comfortable with, to minimize the chances of slip-ups. The player characters are also given a code phrase they can use to identify themselves to Tanner; if they refer to the Kansas City Chiefs (a football team from the old USA) in conversation with him, Tanner should recognize that they are fellow undercover officers.

Tanner's personnel file isn't on the characters' terminals, but basic information on him is readily available in the Star's network. Tanner is an eight-year veteran; his file shows no black marks and a moderate number of citations and commendations. He has spent the past four years doing undercover work and seems to have developed a knack for extended, deep-cover assignments.

DEBUGGING

Not much can go wrong in this encounter; unlike shadowrunners, Lone Star officers don't have the option to turn down assignments they don't like. If the players get too caught up in the details of the search for the Futuremen, remind them that their main goal is to locate Tanner, who may know more about the gang than the Lone Star files can reveal.

If the players decide to investigate the body shop first, go to ***Chez* Cuca;** if they prefer to start at Tanner's hotel, go to **Leopard's Den.** They may also want to check with their own contacts; for these inquiries, refer to **Legwork**, page 23.

LEOPARD'S DEN

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

So this is where Sergeant Tanner holes up when he's slumming it as "Leopard" Leonard. *The Solomon Arms*—the name sounds respectable, but judging from the outside of the place, Solomon would have been better off having his arms surgically replaced. Still, the four-story hotel isn't as bad as some of the squats you've seen—it's not bad at all for the kind of thug Tanner's pretending to be. The desk clerk actually looks up as you enter and watches you cross to the stairs; he even looks like he's considering a surly hello. Now that's service.

Tanner's "suite"—if you can call it that— is on the third floor. After a little huffing and puffing, you arrive at the door. It's closed and locked, with no sign of forced entry or anything else unusual. It's quiet inside, as far as you can tell. Either nobody's home or they're being mighty inconspicuous.

Once the characters are inside Tanner's rooms, read the following:

After assuring yourselves that no one's in the suite—alive or otherwise—you take a look around the place. Either Tanner's a natural-born slob, or he really gets into character when he's undercover; he's left enough dirty socks lying around to clothe half of Tacoma, and the Nuke-It Burger wrappers could probably cover up the rest. It looks like general day-to-day mess, though; there's no sign of a struggle or foul play. The garbage can in the kitchen is full, but it hasn't started to stink yet, so he probably hasn't been gone more than a day or so.

No messages are on the telecom, and someone either erased any old messages or hid them somewhere in the unit's storage memory. All in all, it looks like there's not much to go on here.

HOOKS

Tanner's hotel hideaway should seem like a dead end at first. Allow the players to poke around, but they shouldn't find much of interest apart from the telecom unit (and even that doesn't give them much). The sergeant's unexpected return should give the whole scene a strange air, throwing the characters a curve ball and arousing their curiosity. Tanner's erratic behavior should tip the characters off that something odd is going on, but be careful not give too much away too soon. Play with the humor inherent in Tanner's bizarre mood swings, but don't let it get out of hand.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Getting into the suite is the characters' first problem. They get no answer if they knock, and breaking in will probably attract unwanted attention from the other residents or the desk clerk. (The characters need not worry about being arrested if the neighbors call the cops, but drawing attention to themselves and Tanner won't help the case any; in fact, they could end up ruining weeks of careful undercover work.) The characters can also try asking the clerk to give them the key or let them in. Identifying themselves

as Lone Star officers will ensure the clerk's cooperation, but will probably also raise unwelcome questions about Tanner—assuming he is still alive and undercover. Remind the players of this fact, if necessary. A better alternative is to bribe the clerk into letting them in; being a moderately conscientious sort, he will demand at least 250 nuyen—more if the characters seem to have violent intentions. (If the players think to ask, tell them that their characters can put the bribe on their expense report, meaning that they may be reimbursed ... in six months or so.)

Tanner's suite is almost as devoid of clues as it appears. All evidence indicates that he left of his own volition a day or so ago and just hasn't been back yet. The sole item of interest is the telecom. A character who makes a successful Computer (5) Test will get past the comm terminal's password security and can search the unit's datastore. The only item of interest in the datastore is a large, free-form file of notes, which is encrypted with the equivalent of Scramble-6 IC. A character may decrypt this file by making a successful Computer (10) Test, with the target number reduced by the rating of any Decrypt utility the character uses.

The file contains all the information in Tanner's reports to Lone Star, plus a few additional notes on Dr. Cuca's body shop—including the LTG number for the shop's Matrix system and a list of patients who are suspected of being involved with the Futuremen. Unfortunately, the list consists only of the patients' names, and most of those are street names or other aliases. Characters who try to track down any of those individuals find it a long, tedious process with a low success rate, and get no more out of the suspects than earlier investigators did. If players insist on taking this route, make it as difficult as possible for them to get anywhere. Have them find fifteen different guys with the same street name as the suspect they're tracking, none of whom turns out to be him; when they finally find the right one, he's comatose in a hospital bed after an especially nasty shadowrun, or he's a straight-arrow sarariman with 2.5 kids and a dog who lives in a corporate enclave where the Star has no jurisdiction (or something else equally frustrating). The players should figure out pretty quickly that they're wasting time.

HONEY, I'M HOME!

Once the players have had a chance to look around and perhaps start working with the telecom, have Tanner return. (He has just been discharged from the clinic and appears fine.) If the characters were smart enough to post a lookout in the hall or on the ground floor, the lookout needs to make a successful Perception (5) Test to recognize that the approaching individual is Tanner—after all, the characters only saw his photo briefly in Burns' office.

Tanner is familiar with surveillance, and so the gamemaster should make a Perception (6) Test for him to notice the lookout. Adjust the target number up or down depending on how well (or poorly) the lookout conceals himself. The gamemaster should also make a Perception (4) Test for Tanner to notice any signs of forced entry into his room. If he senses that something is going on, he backs off and observes from down the hall or across the street as appropriate. Suspecting that the characters may represent a lead to the Futuremen, he trails them discreetly until they spot him or he determines by their behavior or conversation that the characters are Lone Star officers, at which point he approaches them and identifies himself.

If Tanner notices nothing unusual around his rooms, he will enter with moderate caution, and so the characters' presence will surprise him. On realizing that he is not alone, he will draw his gun as if expecting trouble, but will not fire unless attacked. He will act suspicious and defensive until the characters refer to the Kansas City Chiefs, thereby proving to him that they are from the Star.

When Tanner realizes that his fellow officers have been through his rooms, he will be annoyed but will calm down when the characters point out that he is overdue for his report. Tanner will explain his lateness by stating that he was investigating the body shop and was in surgical recovery for longer than he expected. He will go on to tell the characters what little he knows, most of which was already in the reports he sent to the Star. At some point in the conversation, Tanner will stop in mid-sentence, freeze for a long moment, and then continue speaking on a completely different subject. He may suggest that the characters return to the precinct offices and report that everything's fine. After another few moments, he will abruptly ask the characters to accompany him to a meeting with a potential lead.

Tanner has these two "brain glitches" because members of Cuca's staff are monitoring his activities and conversation through the two-way radio they implanted during his surgery. As soon as they hear anything suggesting that Tanner may be a Lone Star agent, they will notify Cuca. Cuca panics and sends Tanner conflicting commands: first to shut up, then to get rid of the characters. Once he realizes that this order will send the characters right back to Lone Star, where they will associate his name and clinic with the Futuremen, he changes his strategy; he orders Tanner to lead the characters to an isolated spot where the other Futuremen can ambush him.

Cuca is a brilliant scientist but no tactician, and he may change plans several times before finally settling on one. Tanner's behavior should reflect the conflicting orders he is receiving; his speech may be erratic and contradictory, and he may change conversational topics in mid-sentence more than once.

DEBUGGING

This scene will require a fair amount of improvisation by the gamemaster, depending on the characters' actions. The main objective is to have the characters meet Tanner and notice his odd behavior, without giving away what's really going on. Bear in mind that Tanner has no idea his brand-new implants are affecting him this way; his own mind keeps him from recognizing his erratic behavior. Furthermore, he no longer believes that Cuca's connection to the Futuremen is anything more than casual. For his part, Cuca is trying desperately to get rid of the characters while drawing as little attention to himself and his "clinic" as possible; however, his nervous indecision and plan changes will likely have the opposite effect.

If the characters accidentally (or intentionally) attack Tanner and wound him, they will have an *extremely* hard time explaining their conduct to him and their superiors at Lone Star. Unless they do a lot of fancy verbal footwork, they will be pulled off the case and suspended for disciplinary action. Oops.

If the characters decide to investigate Cuca's clinic, despite Tanner's objectives, allow them to do so. Cuca, through Tanner, will know what's going on and be waiting for them with a "clean" clinic so go to ***Chez* Cuca;** if they accompany Tanner to the ambush site, go to **Whose Side Are You On?** (p. 17). If a decker decides to investigate Cuca's Matrix system, see **Decking the Doctor** (p. 16).

CHEZ CUCA

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Dr. Cuca's chop shop is underneath MindSound Music, a music store that operates as a front business. You drive up to the place, park across the street and take a few minutes to observe the store in question. MindSound Music is in a one-story building; there's a Kennedy's Cheap Electronics outlet on one side and an Amazonian café on the other, both separated from MindSound by a narrow alley and both apparently on the verge of going out of business. Like much of the neighborhood, all three buildings look like they were just renovated, but their relative cleanliness doesn't seem to have done much for their bottom lines.

Nothing about the place looks unusual, which is probably just how the doctor wants it. The glass in the door and windows is laced with metal reinforcements, and there are large shutters ready to roll down over the whole storefront at night. You don't see much traffic going in or out of the store; in fact, the "OPEN" sign above the door and the occasional movements of a single clerk inside are the only clues that the place hasn't gone belly-up.

When the characters enter the store, read the following:

A long glass cabinet full of musical accessories dominates one side of the shop; a small but diverse selection of string instruments hangs on the wall behind it. Synths of all descriptions line the other side of the showroom. The back half of the store is cluttered with drums of all shapes and sizes, from handmade Amerindian tom-toms to massive chrome-and-glitter kits made up of dozens of palm-sized synth trigger pads. You can see a small walled-off section at the back of the store, with a door that probably leads to the body shop. You also spot a few surveillance cameras designed to keep the merchandise safe … or maybe to let the doc scope out potential clients.

The clerk is a frizzy-haired, wiry elf, maybe thirty, with half a dozen rings in each ear and color-cycling tattoos on both arms. He's perched on a stool behind the counter, making adjustments to an antique guitar. Stubbing out a nicotine stick, he eyes you speculatively. "Help you find anything?"

HOOKS

This store operates on two separate levels of deceit. On the one hand, what looks like a music store is really an illegal body shop; that much the characters know. However, the illegal body shop is also a front for Renraku's efforts to build a secret army of cybersoldiers. Play the scene with plenty of subtle references, double entendres and meaningful glances; both the clerk and the characters think they know something the other doesn't and act accordingly. Everything said should seem to have an extra layer of significance, even though the characters may not yet know why. The reaction to the player characters will be subtly but importantly different if Cuca knows they are coming. The following passages outline these differences.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Lindy, the clerk, is actually a Renraku operative. His job is to screen potential "patients" before admitting them to the body shop and generally keep an eye out for trouble. He's bright and not easily fooled, so the characters will have to watch what they say to avoid arousing his suspicions.

While a skilled combatant, Lindy can't hold off the player characters alone if they decide to attack him. However, the store's surveillance systems are working constantly, and any sign of trouble will summon a squad of plainclothes Renraku soldiers from the rear of the store (actually the entrance to the underground research facility). Cuca's cyberclinic, located at the front of the facility, is only the most obvious part of a larger underground complex that houses the entire Futuremen project.

The buildings on either side of MindSound Music are also Renraku front businesses, connected to the same underground complex. This set-up enables Renraku to move large amounts of equipment and personnel into the complex without attracting undue attention. The staff in these buildings—two salesmen in the electronics shop, a cook and a waiter in the café—are also Renraku agents. Should they become involved in combat, use the Company Man profile (p. 204, **SR II**), and equip them with the same gear as Lindy.

Lindy

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	Armor
6	6	6	4	5	4	2.15	5 (10)	4/3

Initiative: 10 + 3D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 4/3
Body Index: 1
Skills: Firearms 6, Unarmed Combat 6
Cyberware: Retractable Spur, Skillwires Plus (3), Softlink (3), Wired Reflexes (2)
Bioware: Enhanced Articulation, Orthoskin (3), Trauma Damper
Gear: Form-Fitting Body Armor-2 (3/1), Ares Viper Slivergun [Heavy Pistol, 30 (clip), SA/BF, 9S(f)], Skillsofts for Music (3), Biotech (3) and Amazonian Portuguese (3)

Lindy may react to the characters in several different ways. If they have Tanner with them *and* the Renraku personnel don't yet know that Tanner is a Lone Star agent, Lindy will be friendly; he hopes that Tanner has brought more potential patients for the doctor. If Cuca and company know that Tanner is a cop, Lindy will act friendly but will try to stall the characters long enough for Cuca to set an ambush with Futuremen (see **Whose Side Are You On?**, p. 17). If the characters arrive without Tanner, Lindy will play receptionist—he can hook the characters up with Cuca if they

seem to want illicit cybersurgery but will keep a close eye on them. Finally, if the characters present themselves as police and ask questions about Tanner and/or Cuca, Lindy will deny any knowledge of either man.

Lindy will question characters who inquire about surgery. If the characters can convince him that they're regular street grunts instead of undercover Lone Star cops, he will escort them downstairs to meet Cuca. Cuca will play the part of a slightly eccentric street doc, offering the characters all sorts of implants whether they need them or not; as this role is close to his actual personality, he plays it quite well. Characters who agree to undergo augmentation surgery will not be shown any parts of the complex apart from the surgery room, recovery room, Cuca's office and the hallway connecting them. Any questions about what's behind other doors get the following answer: "Storage ... you know, sheets, bandages, hazardous biological waste, that sort of thing." All the doors are locked to discourage the overly curious.

If the Cuca knows the characters are Lone Star but they are still maintaining their undercover status (as they should), he will act even more strangely. He will open each door first and look around inside before he allows anyone to enter (he is looking to make sure that nothing has the Renraku logo or even looks vaguely like it can be tied to the corp).

If Tanner is with the characters, he receives instructions from Marcus Powell, the Futuremen project's Renraku manager. From a position in the facility command center, Powell feeds Tanner lines such as "this place is clean" or "he's a good man this doctor, helps the people on the street" and "my contact on the Futuremen won't wait all night." When Tanner repeats this last line, Cuca will go into a long story about a patient under anesthesia who revealed that the Futuremen are operating very close to the planned ambush site.

The player characters should get the hint that someone (or everyone) is lying. If the player characters voice this suspicion, Cuca and Tanner will laugh about "paranoid times." The doctor will eventually excuse himself and let Tanner take the characters to a waiting room or leave with them. With guards in every hallway Cuca is not concerned they will try something in the HQ, he just wants them out.

UNDERGROUND COMPLEX

The underground complex contains research facilities, monitoring and communications systems and a complete observation and command post. From this facility, Renraku staffers monitor each "patient" during his or her daily activities and conversations, looking for any lapses in responses to commands or anything that might give away the project's existence. The Futuremen's attacks and activities are coordinated at this facility, with a radio operator issuing orders to each gang member while tactical specialists assess the overall situation through surveillance drones and issue commands accordingly.

All the rooms have a Rating 6 Maglock (high for such a facility). The Command Center has a Rating 10 Maglock. The facility is headed by Marcus Powell, a Renraku manager. Powell views the project as his best route up the corporate ladder, and so he will not tolerate any mistakes. During his frequent off-site meetings with various corporate executives, the operation nominally falls under Cuca's command.

Surgery (1)

This room contains Cuca's cybersurgery equipment, two separate operating tables, sterilizers and all the necessary accessories. The equipment has been "aged" to avoid arousing patients' suspicions, but a successful Biotech (6) or Cybertechnology (4) Test will reveal that the equipment is well-maintained and extremely up-to-date, and thus probably very expensive.

A smaller room to one side (**1A**) holds medical supplies and some common cybertech implants. A thorough search will reveal a large number of headware radios, each attached to a small cybernetic device whose function is unknown (this device is the behavior-control implant).

Recovery Room (2)

Four beds, none currently occupied, take up most of the space in the recovery room; curtains separate the beds into semi-private alcoves. The room's shorter walls feature large mirrors, which are actually one-way windows for the benefit of Renraku specialists in the observation rooms. Characters examining the recovery room should make a Perception (5) Test. If a character achieves 1 or more successes, he or she notices that each of the four beds is fitted with a high-quality, custom-built simsense player (used for conditioning patients to obey orders). If asked, Cuca explains that the units keep patients entertained during recovery as well as helping train them in the use of their new cyberware. However, such luxury items are hardly standard issue in an illegal cyberclinic, and their presence may well make the characters suspicious.

Observation Rooms (3)

These rooms allow Renraku personnel to observe patients during their recovery and simsense "training." Large one-way mirrors allow a clear view into the recovery room, and medical monitoring equipment fills both of the rooms. Unless there are patients in the recovery room, these rooms will be unoccupied except for a single security guard (see below). The doors are kept locked at all times.

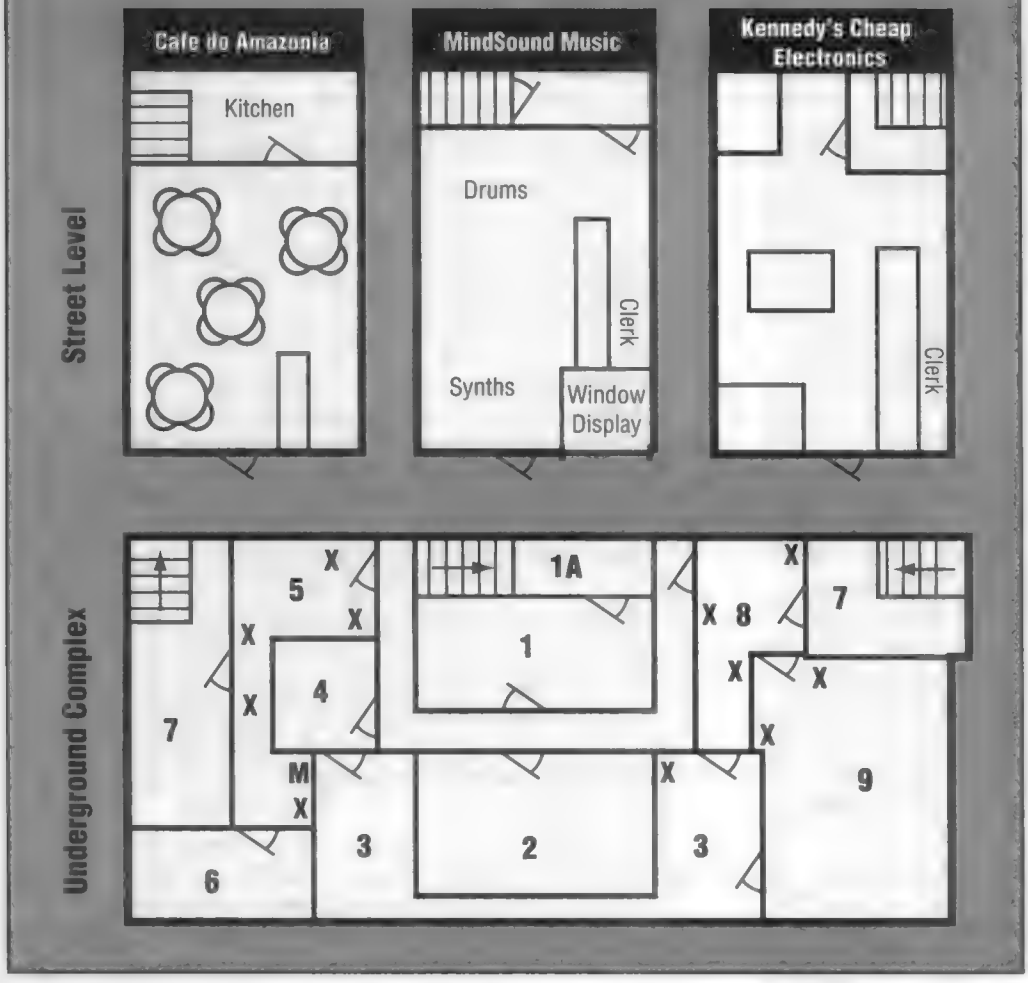
Dr. Cuca's Office (4)

This office contains the usual furnishings—a desk, chairs, medical charts and a cyberterminal. If a decker can get access to this terminal without attracting attention, he can deck into Host C of the project's Matrix system (see **Decking the Doctor**, p. 16). Treat this terminal as a workstation for purposes of access (p. 29, **VR 2.0**). Characters cannot normally get into this room unless Cuca is present. Cuca is usually here when not tending to patients.

Ready Room (5)

Most of the facility's guards are stationed here, lounging on the cheap chairs and drinking the cold soykaf. They are ready to respond to intrusions originating from MindSound Music, Kennedy's Cheap Electronics or the Café do Amazonia but will remain behind closed doors unless it seems someone is about to

FUTUREMEN COMPLEX AND SURROUNDINGS



discover something they shouldn't. One guard continuously monitors feeds from the facility's security cameras, which are located both underground and in the various buildings above. The facility's security mage is also here (her position is marked with an "M" on the map), usually on a cushioned couch with life-support monitors (the better to patrol astrally).

If Cuca knows the player characters are Lone Star, the guards will be out and about. They may pose as nurses or even patients—be creative.

Powell's Office (6)

Like Cuca's office, this standard-issue room includes a terminal that gives access to the facility's Matrix host. If Cuca knows the player characters are Lone Star and they arrive with Tanner, Powell will be in the Command Center. Otherwise, there is a 2 in 6 chance that Powell will be in this office at any given time. If he's off-site tending to other matters, he locks the door.

Storage Rooms (7)

These two rooms, one in the basement of the Café do Amazonia and the other beneath Kennedy's Cheap Electronics, are alternate means of access to the underground research facility. In case curious eyes see them, both rooms appear to be innocuous storage areas, containing foodstuffs or electronic gadgets as appropriate. Ordinary-looking doors lead from each room to the rest of the facility. These doors are kept locked; the facility's staff all carry passkeys that open them. Each contains a cyberware scanner hidden between the boxes. It is used by guards when they let someone come down.

Guard Room (8)

The guard room is a smaller version of the Ready Room, without the video monitors or security mage.

Command Center (9)

The Futuremen are monitored and controlled from this room. Three dozen workstations fill most of the space. Each is equipped with a two-way radio and signal tracer. Each radio is assigned to one particular Futureman; the radio relays what the gang member hears and broadcasts commands, while the signal tracer enables staffers to keep an eye on each member's location. In addition, a pair of rigger terminals offer video feedback from surveillance drones, which are usually reserved for raids or other large-scale gang activities.

In addition to the two security guards at the door, the command center contains twenty or so scientists, staffers and technicians. None of these are armed or trained for combat; if you need statistics for them, use the Pedestrian profile (p. 25, **Contacts**). Each also has a softlink with an Amazonian Portuguese linguasoft; all commands to the Futuremen are given in Portuguese, which is Cuca's native language. This cuts down on the chance that someone will accidentally give a wrong command to one of the gang members, and also that anyone picking up the facility's radio broadcasts will realize the significance of what they are hearing.

SECURITY

A dozen guards and a security mage are on duty in the complex at any given time. They all wear street clothes, so as not to attract undue attention if they are somehow spotted from above. If a patron of any of the front businesses sees something he or she

shouldn't, the guards are ready to respond with deadly force. They generally do not leave their positions (marked by X's on the map) unless responding to an emergency situation.

The mage usually spends ten minutes astrally patrolling the area, followed by twenty minutes of rest. She also has a Force 3 watcher spirit in each of the above-ground buildings; the spirits alert her any time an outsider enters. The mage then assenses each visitor. If she senses anything unusual about the person's aura, she remains on the astral plane to observe the intruder.

Each entrance has a cyberware scanner and the guards will use it on new "patients" as they enter the clinic. This allows Cuca to decide if he can use the character for his experiments.

Renraku Guards (12)

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	Armor
4	3	3	3	3	2	5.5	3	4/1

Initiative: 3 + 2D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 3/3
Skills: Armed Combat 3, Firearms 4
Cyberware: Boosted Reflexes (1)
Gear: Form-Fitting Body Armor-3 (4/1), SCK Model 100 [SMG, 30 (clip), SA/BF, 7M] with sound suppresser, AZ-150 Stun Baton [+1 Reach, 8S Stun]

Security Mage

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	M	Armor
2	4	2	6	5	3	6	5	6	4/1

Initiative: 5 + 1D6 (21 + 1D6 when astral)
Threat/Professional Rating: 4/3
Skills: Conjuring 4, Firearms 3, Sorcery 6
Gear: Form-Fitting Body Armor-3 (4/1), SCK Model 100 [SMG, 30 (clip), SA/BF, 7M] with sound suppresser
Spells: False Memory 6, Manabolt 6, Mind Probe 5, Stunball 4, Treat 4

DEBUGGING

After visiting MindSound Music and/or Cuca's clinic, the characters may come away with the same impression Tanner did—that the place is no more than meets the eye. This reaction is fine; enough goes on elsewhere in the adventure to bring the characters back to the clinic.

If the characters plan to charge in with guns a-blazin', remind them that they're cops, not shadowrunners, and that they probably don't have enough evidence to get a search warrant yet. (If they go for a warrant, a Renraku stoolie in the Justice Department will tip the company off, which may give the Renraku staffers enough time to clean out the facility; see the timeline in **This May Sting A Little,** p. 21.)

If the characters have not yet visited Tanner's hotel and wish to go there next, proceed to **Leopard's Den** (p. 10). If they depart with Tanner, continue with **Whose Side Are You On?** (p. 17).

A decker can try to break into the Futureman system as soon as the team knows a system exists. (This would be standard Lone Star practice, especially in a case of an illegal business.) The decker may be a player character or NPC and will start immediately once the player characters learn of Cuca's establishment. In fact, the decker can be working while the characters are getting the "tour." In this case, go to **Decking the Doctor.**

DECKING THE DOCTOR

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

You're not sure what this Dr. Cuca is up to, but a run into his system may turn up some clues. With the LTG number you got from Tanner, it's easy enough to track down the music store that serves as the chop shop's front; now it's time to get inside and see what you can dig up by turning over a few stones.

HOOKS

As with ***Chez* Cuca**, this scene should start out offering few leads; the doctor's system initially appears to be exactly what it seems. However, once a decker discovers the trap door to the real system or starts running into the unusually heavy ice, the characters will have good cause to suspect that something else is going on.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The characters may get the LTG number for the Futuremen project Matrix hosts in one of several ways. The easiest is by searching through Tanner's telecom; Tanner also knows the number, but Cuca will order him to shut up if he suspects Tanner is about to give this information away. The characters may also get the number by searching the datanets for information on the good doctor through standard procedures (p. 114, **VR 2.0**). The decker can learn about it through the Shadowland BBS if he or she has that group as a contact (see p. 67, **SRComp**). If the characters decide to call in Lone Star's GridSec division to assist in this search, reduce by 1 the target number for finding the LTG number.

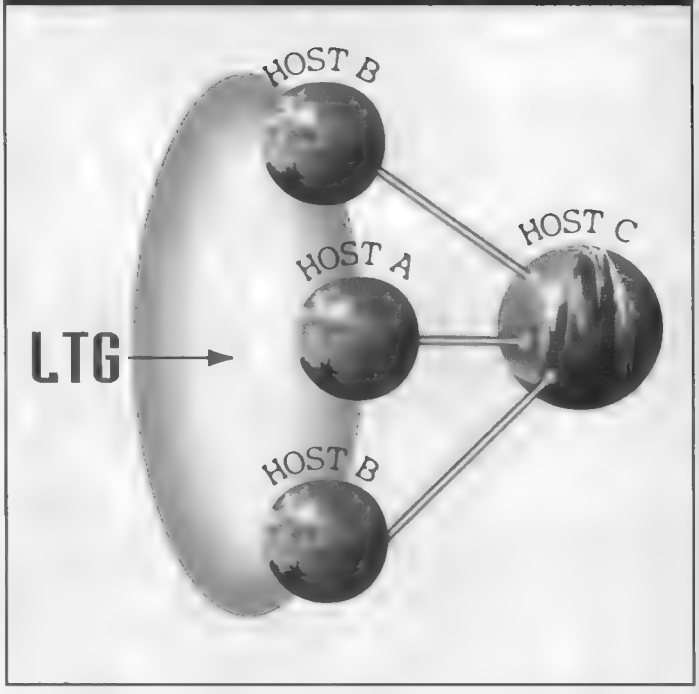
If the characters deck into the system while physically at the clinic—for example, if a decker character sneaks into Cuca's office while his or her fellow officers are being given the nickel tour of the chop shop—you will need to adapt the **Tell It To Them Straight** section accordingly.

HOST A: GREEN-6/8/10/8/9/10

Host A handles accounting and advertising for MindSound Music, as well as the concealed (and largely falsified) records of Cuca's body shop operations. The iconography is mostly standard UMS, with a few minor tweaks suitable to a music store—sales and accounting programs wear Maria Mercurial T-shirts, and the background music is more likely to be Darwin's Bastards than some easy-listening drek. A Bouncer routine will be activated if the system scores any successes against a decker who is performing an operation on the body shop files (as opposed to the music store files).

The host's Control subsystem conceals a trap door to Host C, where the research and operations systems for the Futuremen project are kept.

FUTUREMEN MATRIX HOSTS



MindSound Music Security Sheaf

Trigger Step	Event
6	Probe-5
11	Probe-5
16	Jammer-7; Passive Alert
20	Bouncer: upgrade Security Code to Orange-8
24	Cascading Jam-Rip-6
27	Trap Trace-8 (Blaster-6)
30	Active Alert
33	Expert Sparky-8 (Offense +2)
36	Shutdown

HOSTS B: Green-8/11/15/12/12/11

The Matrix systems for the Café do Amazonia and Kennedy's Cheap Electronics both use the Host B security sheaf. These two hosts use standard UMS iconography, and by and large contain data for the front businesses. An inquisitive decker, however, might find some items in the bookkeeping systems that would raise a few questions (like, "Why does a no-frills café in Seattle need four dozen Portuguese linguasofts?" or "Why does Kennedy's keep ordering more cyber-radio implants when there's no record that they've ever sold any?").

As with Host A, these systems have a hidden connection to Host C, a trap door within the Control subsystem. The Control subsystems on these hosts are also infected with tapeworm IC.

Café do Amazonia/Kennedy's Cheap Electronics Security Sheaf

Trigger Step	Event
6	Probe-6
12	Trace-8 (Shield)
17	Jam-Rip-8; Passive Alert
21	Tar Pit-10
25	Active Alert; Trace-10
29	Construct (Armor, Shifting)
	Blaster-5
	Mark-Rip-5
34	Shutdown

HOST C: RED-10/18/15/16/16/13

Host C is the heavily guarded "gold mine" that contains the truth about Cuca's project. No files on this host directly link the project with Renraku, but the files include plenty of names on memos and other records that can eventually be traced back to the corporation. A decker invading this system can also find a list of the Futuremen and the cyberware each of them carries, as well as a list of commands in Portuguese (fire, retreat, wait, kill and so on). These are the commands the Renraku staffers use to order the Futuremen around.

The system is sculpted to represent a gorgeous tropical beach, crowded with sunbathers and swimmers. Datafiles are stored in the beach bags of the various beachgoers, but the lifeguards (IC) are watchful—and heavily armed.

Futuremen Project Security Sheaf

Trigger Step	Event
2	Cascading Mark-Rip-8 (Shield)
5	Trap Trace-10 (Sparky-8)
8	Passive Alert: Construct (Armor)
	Probe-6
	Trace-6
	Killer-6
11	Cascading Sparky-10
13	Active Alert: a Renraku decker arrives in 2D6 turns
17	Expert Black IC: –8/+2 Offense
21	Party IC
	Acid-Rip-5
	Bind-Rip-5
	Jam-Rip-5
	Mark-Rip-5
25	Cascading Black IC-10
29	Shutdown

Any character tracked down by trace IC in any of these systems can expect a visit from a squad of Futuremen, possibly including Tanner. See Futuremen stats in **Whose Side Are You On?** (p. 18) for details.

DEBUGGING

If a player-character decker does the Matrix decking, not too much can go wrong unless he or she is too weak to handle the MindSound system or too strong to be slowed down by the Renraku system's IC. Feel free to adjust the ice or a few dice rolls if necessary. Let the characters get solid leads from the search if they're stuck, but don't give everything away if they're doing well.

If the characters don't have a decker among them and ask the Lone Star GridSec department to deck into Cuca's system, handle the request according to how much the players need the help. If they are making good progress on their own, have the GridSec department complain about "excessive cross-divisional resource requests," then drag their feet, and finally do a half-hearted run that turns up no sign of anything unusual. If the players are stuck or out of ideas, a GridSec investigation could turn up hints of something big going on at the body shop, which should motivate the characters to explore the shop in greater depth.

WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Tanner seems pretty quiet as you head out to the place where he's supposed to meet his contact. He must be racking his brains for another angle on the elusive Futuremen—or maybe he's trying to get his head back on straight after flaking out earlier. You're still not sure why he's been acting so weird, but going with him is the best way to find out. Or so you keep telling yourself.

Eventually, you pull up in front of an abandoned warehouse somewhere near Green Lake. A real garden spot, this place—it's so deserted, even the rats have moved out. Tanner leads you down a puddle-filled alleyway, stopping periodically to glance around. There's no sign of his contact. As you turn a garbage-strewn corner, you hear footsteps from the far end of the alleyway—and then more footsteps, and more, and still more from behind you. Either Tanner's contact has a badly split personality or you've walked into an ambush. Tanner seems to realize it too—he's drawing his Browning.

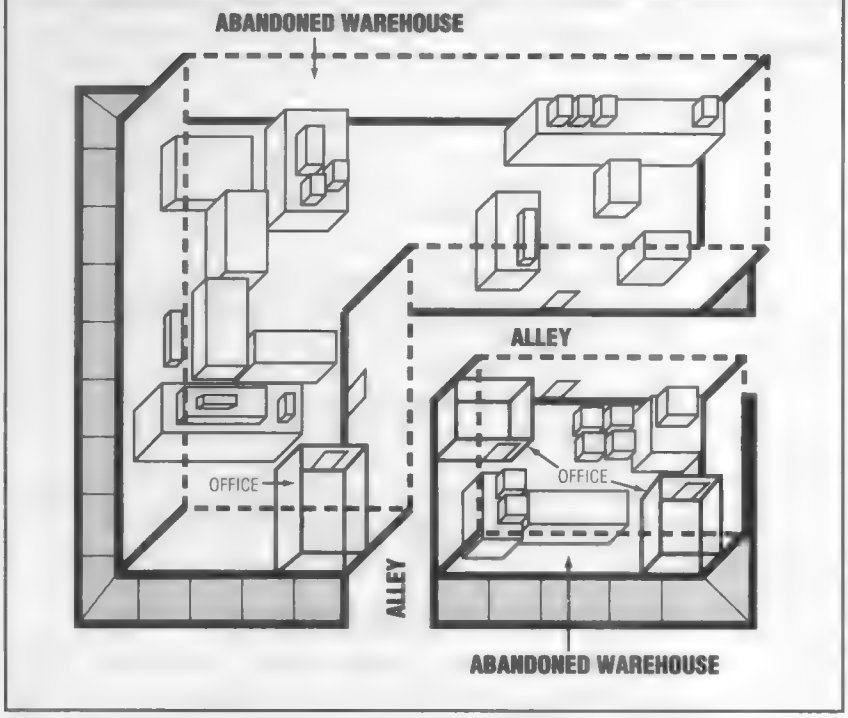
Problem is, he's pointing it at you.

HOOKS

Tell It To Them Straight assumes that Tanner leads the characters into a Futuremen ambush. However, the attack can take place in a number of other ways. For example, trace IC may have led the gang to the team's decker, or Lindy may have stalled the characters at MindSound Music until the gang members arrive to take care of them. Adjust the description as necessary, according to the way the ambush plays out in your particular game.

If the characters have not yet realized that Tanner is mixed up with the bad guys, this encounter will tip them off. Suddenly they are in unknown territory, outnumbered and outgunned, with an unsuspected enemy in their midst. The players should get a big sinking feeling during this scene, and their characters will have to pull every trick on the datachip to get out with their hides intact.

AMBUSH SITE



Play up the zombie-like actions of the Futuremen to lend the scene an eerie overtone as well.

BEHIND THE SCENES

In a panic reaction, Dr. Cuca has gathered ten or so Futuremen to wipe out the characters; he doesn't quite realize that killing a bunch of cops is the surest way to guarantee that the investigation into the gang will not die away. That fact may be little consolation to the characters, however, who are facing a heavily cybered gang of thugs from the poorest possible defensive position.

Though this scenario assumes that the ambush takes place in a Ravenna alley near Green Lake, the attack can be staged at any location and time that suits the course of your adventure. For example, if the player characters are overtly aggressive in the music shop or in the chop shop, Cuca may have Tanner and the Futuremen attack the players at one of those locations, or Cuca may stage the ambush at Tanner's undercover apartment.

Cuca prefers the alley site simply because it's an isolated location where no one will be around to see his overhead drones, the Futuremen, the attack itself, or the Renraku clean-up team ready to move in and remove the bodies after the smoke clears.

The ambushers will wait until Tanner has led the characters to the point where the alley turns a corner. At that point half of the Futuremen will appear ahead of the characters and the other half will close off escape from the rear. Trapping the player characters at the corner allows the two groups of Futuremen to fire freely at the characters without hitting each other. (Tanner will be in the line of fire, of course, but that's no big problem as far as Cuca is concerned. As a Lone Star plant, Tanner will have to be killed anyway.) Breaking into one of the warehouses on either side of the alley is the characters' best bet for survival. This will give them some cover and a better chance to escape.

Use about one-and-a-half Futuremen per character (round up) plus Tanner. Those odds should provide a fair fight. If the player characters are really tough, use two Futuremen per character.

Tanner's statistics appear in **Cast of Shadows** (p. 24). For the remaining Futuremen, use the following base statistics. Modify the stats as desired to reflect the diverse assortment of cyberware and equipment the different Futuremen carry. Mix up the group by metahuman types, too. A recommended mix for a ten-character ambush party would be five humans, two orks, an elf, a dwarf and a troll. Feel free to adjust these numbers to balance the difficulty level of the combat (or ignore metatype/racial differences to simplify bookkeeping during combat).

Futureman (Human)

B	S	Q	I	W	C	R	E	Armor
5	5	6	4	3	3	5 (9)	1.88	5/3

Initiative: 9 + 2D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 2/4
Skills: Firearms 5, Unarmed Combat 4
Cyberware (all alpha-grade): Cyberarm (Right Arm [+2 Strength, +2 Quickness], Cybergun Shotgun, Retractable Spur), Cybereyes (Low-Light, Thermographic vision), Headware Radio (Subdermal Speakers), Reaction Enhancer (2), Smartlink II, Wired Reflexes (1)
Gear: Secure Jacket (5/3), Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M], Cyber-shotgun [shotgun, 8 (magazine), SA, 10S]

Futureman (Ork)

B	S	Q	I	W	C	R	E	Armor
7	6 (8)	4 (6)	2	2	1	3 (9)	2.28	5/3

Initiative: 9 + 3D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 2/4
Body Index: 2.6
Skills: Firearms 5, Unarmed Combat 5
Cyberware (all alpha-grade): Headware Radio (Subdermal Speakers), Retractable Spur, Smartlink II, Wired Reflexes (2)
Bioware: Enhanced Articulation, Muscle Augmentation (2), Trauma Damper
Gear: Armored Jacket (5 /3), Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M], Uzi III [SMG, 24 (clip), BF, 6M]

Futureman (Dwarf)

B	S	Q	I	W	C	R	E	Armor
6 (8)	5 (7)	4 (6)	2	3	2	3 (4)	1.12	7/5

Initiative: 8 + 3D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 2/4
Body Index: 3

Skills: Firearms 4, Unarmed Combat 6
Cyberware (all alpha-grade): Bone Lacing (titanium), Headware Radio (Subdermal Speakers), Wired Reflexes (2)
Bioware: Muscle Augmentation (2), Orthoskin (2), Trauma Damper
Gear: Secure Jacket (5/3), Browning Max-Power [Heavy Pistol, 10 (clip), SA, 9M], Ingram Warrior-10 [SMG, 30 (clip), SA/BF, 7M]

Futureman (Elf)

B	S	Q	I	W	C	R	E	Armor
4	3 (5)	7 (11)	3	2	3	5 (10)	.24	5/3

Initiative: 10 + 3D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 2/4
Body Index: 0.6
Skills: Firearms 5, Armed Combat 5
Cyberware (all alpha-grade): Headware Radio (Subdermal Speakers), Move-by-Wire System (2), Muscle Replacement (2), Smartlink II
Bioware: Damage Compensator (3)
Gear: Secure Jacket (5/3), Ingram Smartgun [SMG, 32 (clip), BF/FA, 7M], Katana with Dikote [+1 Reach, 9M]

Futureman (Troll)

B	S	Q	I	W	C	R	E	Armor
7 (8)	6 (10)	3 (7)	3	2	1	3 (9)	2.92	5/3

Initiative: 9 + 3D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 2/4
Body Index: 6.1
Skills: Firearms 4, Armed Combat 5
Cyberware (all alpha-grade): Headware Radio (Subdermal Speakers), Wired Reflexes (2)
Bioware: Adrenal Pump (2), Muscle Augmentation (4), Trauma Damper
Gear: Armored Jacket (5/3), Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M], Combat Axe [+2 Reach, 10S], Enfield AS-7 [Shotgun, 10 (clip), SA/BF, 8S]

Generally, the humans, orks and elves among the Futuremen will open fire on the characters, while any dwarfs and trolls will close for hand-to-hand combat. The gangers use an all-out offensive style of combat; Cuca wants the player characters dead and doesn't care how many Futuremen he loses in the process.

While the Futuremen are numerous, well-equipped and in excellent position for an ambush, the characters do have a few things going for them. Although the Futuremen are conditioned to instantly obey the commands they receive over their subdermal radios, they won't be as effective as they would be if operating of their own free wills. This condition is reflected in their reduced Threat Ratings and has the following additional game effects:

® The Futuremen have a very limited "command set" and are incapable of devising and executing complex plans. This simple ambush is about the extent of their tactical abilities, and took a fair amount of time to set up. If the characters set up a counter-ambush, feint or other trick, the Futuremen will probably walk right into it. Furthermore, the gangers' reactions are mostly limited to moving, attacking, waiting and retreating.

® The non-chromed technicians giving the Futuremen their orders cannot react to changing situations nearly as well as the hot-wired gangers. To reflect this, make an extra Initiative roll of 4 + 1D6 to represent the controllers' Initiative. This is the only time the Futuremen can change their actions; until this point in the turn, each Futureman will continue executing the last order he received. Fast characters may be able to exploit this "lag time."

® The technicians also have limited knowledge of the battlefield and rely on radio input from the Futuremen and an overhead optical view from a pair of recon drones floating to see what's going on. Anything that restricts this input (physical illusion spells, radio jammers, or even moving inside a building and beyond the drones' sight) will greatly reduce the technicians' ability to see what's going on and direct the Futuremen to respond appropriately. Also, the Futuremen do not communicate with each other; all of their commands come from Cuca and his technicians.

® It is unlikely but possible that the characters may be able to turn the Futuremen's conditioning against them. Any character with a radio may detect a lot of brief commands in Amazonian Portuguese transmitted over a wide variety of frequencies and surmise that the Futuremen are responding to these orders. Any character who knows the language or has an appropriate skillsoft (like, say, the one Lindy had), can order the Futuremen as easily as their Renraku masters. This can lead to a great deal of confusion, as each individual ganger will obey the last order he received. Don't give this possibility away to the players if they don't think of it on their own. But give them a fair chance to discover it if they have the appropriate equipment and think to use it.

The characters also have a distinct advantage over the Futuremen if their team includes any magicians; the Futuremen are strictly mundane and quite vulnerable to magical assault.

Finally, the characters now have a chance to experience the joy of calling for "back-up"—they're cops, remember. Ravenna isn't one of downtown Seattle's nicer neighborhoods, but Lone Star is well aware of the extensive Futuremen activity in the area. If the characters request back-up, a twelve-man Fast Response Team in a Citymaster will arrive 3D6 turns after the request.

If the characters specifically request magical back-up, a Lone Star Department of Paranormal Investigations (DPI) combat mage will arrive on the scene astrally after 1D6 turns. The mage will be accompanied by a pair of Force 4 earth elementals, which may be manifest.

If the characters do not request back-up, two patrol officers in a Chrysler-Nissan Patrol One will arrive on the scene 3D6 turns after the first automatic weapons fire. These officers will not know that the characters are undercover Lone Star officers and may treat them as dangerous suspects. Additionally, the arriving

officers will call in the twelve-man Fast Response Team (FRT), which arrives 3D6 turns after the patrol's arrival. In this case, the FRT troopers won't know who the characters are either. Consequently, the characters may find themselves caught in a crossfire between the arriving officers and the Futuremen or being told to drop their weapons and put their hands on their heads and freeze.

In any case, the Futuremen will attempt to withdraw from combat and scatter when the FRT arrives.

Patrol Officer (2)

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Armor
4	4	4	2	3	4	6	3	4/3

Initiative: 3 + 1D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 2/2
Skills: Armed Combat 2, Etiquette (Corp) 2, Etiquette (Street) 4, Firearms 3, Police Procedure 4, Unarmed Combat 3
Cyberware: None
Gear: Armor Vest w/plates (4/3 + Helmet), Ruger Super Warhawk [Heavy Pistol, 6 (cylinder), SA, 10M, w/24 extra rounds, Laser Sight], Stun Baton (6S Stun), Commlink

FRT Trooper (8)

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	Armor
5	6	5	3	4	4	3.5	5 (7)	8/6

Initiative: 7 + 2D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 4/4
Skills: Car 2, Etiquette (Corp) 3, Etiquette (Street) 4, Firearms 5, Stealth 4, Unarmed Combat 3
Cyberware: Smartlink, Wired Reflexes (1)
Gear: Full Heavy Armor (8/6 + Helmet w/Integral Commlink), Colt Manhunter [Heavy Pistol, 16 (clip), 9M, w/2 extra clips, Internal Smartlink], Stun Baton (6S Stun), Shock Gloves (7S Stun), and one of the following:

AUG-CSL AR [Assault Rifle, 40 (clip), SA/BF/FA, 8M, w/2 extra clips, Internal Smartlink, Gas-Vent 2 Recoil Compensation, Thermographic Scope]

CMDT/SM Combat Gun [Shotgun, 8 (clip), SA/BF, 9S, w/3 extra clips, Internal Smartlink, Gas-Vent 2 Recoil Compensation + Shock Pads (1)]

HK227-S [SMG, 28 (clip), SA/BF, 7M, w/2 extra clips, Internal Smartlink, Gas-Vent 2 Recoil Compensation]

MA 2100 Sniping Rifle [Sniping Rifle, 8 (magazine), SA, 14S, Gas-Vent 3 Recoil Compensation + Shock Pads (1), Thermographic Magnification (3) Scope]

DPI Combat Mage (Astral Back-Up)

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	M	Armor
2	5	2	2	6	6	6	6	5 (8)	–

Initiative: 5(8) + 1D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 3/3
Skills: Conjuring 6, Etiquette (Corp) 2, Etiquette (Street) 1, Magical Theory 6, Sorcery 6
Cyberware: None
Gear: Knife [Weapon Focus (3)], Power Focus (4), Spirit Focus (3)
Spells: Clairvoyance 4, Confusion 4, Control Actions 3, Detect Enemies (Extended) 4, Increase Reaction (+3) 4, Manaball 4, Manabolt 5

DEBUGGING

Obviously, many—maybe even all—of the characters may very well die in the ambush, which is a problem. If they are foolish enough to stand and fight, they deserve to take some heavy punishment. But a disaster here could easily end the adventure, so here are a few ways to keep the characters alive if they don't seem to be managing it on their own.

First, keep in mind that the Futuremen—and Tanner—are under someone else's control; this may be the one factor that buys the characters the few seconds they need to dive into a convenient warehouse before the bullets fly. The Futuremen are acting on instructions from technicians; the technicians, in turn, are taking orders from Cuca. And Cuca, in turn, is not a master strategist—in fact, he may be unsure of the precise moment to give the order to fire. So feel free to fudge some dice rolls to keep the characters alive (though not necessarily kicking) if necessary. Alternatively, you can adjust the number and power of the Futuremen so that they don't overwhelm the characters instantly. Or you can accelerate the arrival of back-up officers ("What a coincidence! The FRT is having a midnight snack at the Drive & Dine two blocks away!"). Keep the players alive, but don't let them get out of this jam too easily, either. After all, Lone Star does offer excellent medical benefits.

Tanner can easily get killed in this scene; he is standing in the Futuremen's line of fire and he's an obvious target for the player characters. If he does die, Lone Star's coroners will discover Cuca's implants in Tanner's body when they examine it, giving the characters final proof of Cuca's activities if they still need it. Alternatively, you can keep Tanner alive but grievously wounded. In this case, Lone Star's doctors discover the implants while treating his injuries, thus dramatically redeeming Tanner.

As soon as the characters defeat the Futuremen or a few of the characters escape, the time line in **This May Sting A Little** (p. 21) goes into effect and Renraku begins to dismantle the underground complex and destroy all evidence of the Futuremen operation. So if the ambush occurs before the player characters visit Cuca's establishment, provide some clues that enable the characters to connect the Futuremen to Cuca. For example, you can have Cuca direct any injured Futuremen back to the clinic so that he can patch them up or destroy them. Or perhaps one of the dead gangers is carrying a MindSound Music business card with Cuca's name on the back, or a fatally wounded Tanner manages to gasp out his suspicions before dying. Even a drone returning to the chop shop can lead the characters to the location of Cuca's clinic.

Once the characters decide to confront Cuca at the complex, go to **This May Sting A Little.** If the characters have already visited the clinic, the Renraku operatives there will be expecting them. The operatives may barricade the place to deny the characters entry or even attempt to ambush the characters.

The Renraku operatives will have completely dismantled and evacuated the complex one hour after the fight between the Futuremen and the characters (see time line). If the characters don't return to the complex before Renraku is finished dismantling it, proceed directly to **Picking Up the Pieces** (p. 22).

THIS MAY STING A LITTLE

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Enough is enough; time to make this Cuca fragger pay. Not only has he been using his private army to wreak havoc in the streets, but he's fragged up a fellow officer—and that's one thing the Star doesn't tolerate. Time to take the mad doctor down … and as you check your sidearm, you secretly hope he's dumb enough to resist arrest.

HOOKS

Depending on how the characters handle Dr. Cuca's arrest, it can be a simple matter of arriving with an overwhelming force and demanding his surrender or a guns-a-blazin' mass assault. The characters should have plenty of reason to loathe the good doctor by now and may be tempted to shoot him for "resisting arrest," but doing so may well ruin their chances of finding out who's really behind the Futuremen operation. In any case, the conflict between wanting him dead and needing him alive to catch the really big fish can provide some good roleplaying opportunities among the bloodshed.

Feel free to fudge the following time line to give the characters a shot at Cuca. Unless the characters really drag their feet, give them a fair chance to bring Cuca and company to justice. If the team includes a decker, let him get into the MindSound system just in time to see the last of the Futuremen project data vanishing (but don't let him identify its destination—Renraku's mainframe) and let him pick up as much evidence as possible before the system is totally wiped. If one of the characters has taken Cuca's actions personally, give him or her a chance to confront the good doctor.

BEHIND THE SCENES

By now, the characters should have enough evidence to figure out that Cuca's clinic is the probable source of the Futuremen. Having seen the gang in action, the characters would be wise to bring along some back-up when they go to arrest the doctor. After some brief negotiations, they should be able to arrange for a Fast Response Team to accompany them. If the characters ask, Lone Star's Department of Paranormal Investigation may loan them a combat mage and/or GridSec may provide a decker if the team doesn't include a mage or decker. Use the character statistics in **Whose Side Are You On?** (p. 20) for the mage.

Let the players plan the approach to the clinic themselves, with appropriate tactical input from the FRT team leader. If the characters have not previously visited the clinic they might not know that the underground complex connects to all the buildings

on the block, which gives the Renraku personnel an advantage or a better chance to escape.

Use the map and NPC statistics provided in ***Chez* Cuca** (pp. 14, 15). The following time line will help the gamemaster determine what is happening at the facility, starting from the moment when the characters either escape from the ambush or defeat the Futuremen (see **Whose Side Are You On?,** pp. 18–19). The trip from the ambush site to the clinic takes approximately ten minutes with sirens blazing; for simplicity's sake, assume that any back-up the characters have requested arrives at the clinic at about the same time the characters do. If the characters radio Lone Star and ask for immediate intervention, the Star can immediately send deckers and/or an astral mage to investigate the clinic, which may disrupt certain events in the time line.

The characters' actions may affect certain events in the time line. For example, the Renraku trucks and staff will flee as soon as any visible Lone Star personnel arrive on the scene, whether or not all the equipment has been loaded. If the characters get into the facility quickly and seem likely to overrun the place, Powell will start the data-wipe before the top-secret data has all been transmitted to Renraku. Finally, if Powell judges that too much evidence is still lying around when the cops arrive, he may detonate the explosive charges earlier.

TIME LINE

Elapsed Time (hours: minutes)	Events
0:00	The characters defeat the Futuremen, or Cuca and company realize that some of the characters have escaped the ambush.
0:02*	Cuca informs Powell of the situation. Powell orders the facility evacuated. Guards are put on alert status, and staffers begin packing up the surgical and monitoring equipment.

*(Feel free to increase this time if the player characters still need to follow up leads or you need to plant more clues to get the player characters to go after Cuca. Powell can wait a considerable time—even days—before acting. In fact, he may assume that the characters have all been killed and may not give the close-down order until the player characters arrive to arrest Cuca.)

0:05	All doors in the MindSound Music building are locked and a "CLOSED" sign is placed in the front window.
0:10	Unmarked trucks from a local Renraku facility arrive; the staffers begin loading the facility's equipment into the trucks.
0:12	Powell begins transmitting the contents of the facility's Matrix systems to the main Renraku system through a short-term emergency SAN.
0:27	The Matrix download finishes; Powell begins wiping all the data on Host C.
0:30	Powell's data-wipe is complete; staffers start to load the computer systems onto the Renraku trucks.
0:35	Guards begin placing small explosive charges throughout the facility to destroy any non-portable equipment or evidence.
0:45	All mobile equipment has been loaded onto the trucks, which depart. All remaining personnel except for Cuca, Powell and the guards leave the facility at this time.
0:55	The guards finish placing the explosive charges. They, Cuca and Powell leave the complex.
1:00	The explosives detonate. Anyone in any of the underground rooms takes 9D damage, and any remaining evidence of the Futuremen project is destroyed.

Powell has three top priorities in this scene. His top priority is eliminating any evidence that might tie the project to Renraku. If possible, he will also try to preserve the existing research data. And if he can manage those two goals, he will also try to protect Renraku's investment by removing as much equipment and evacuating as many personnel out of the facility as possible.

DEBUGGING

If the characters launch a full-scale assault and start running into trouble, a second wave of Lone Star reinforcements can arrive. If the characters seem to be having too easy a time of it, have Cuca call the surviving Futuremen to help defend the facility.

If the characters do not reach the facility before the crucial evidence is gone, you may want to give them a second chance. Let one of them spot the trucks pulling away or recognize Lindy fleeing down a side street and pursue him.

If the player characters don't get enough evidence or don't piece together the various links between the Futuremen, Cuca, Powell and Renraku, their heads will roll. If they are regular Star employees, the characters will be assigned to desk jobs for awhile. If they are contracted help, the Star may fire them.

In any event, Cuca and/or Powell are likely to become Enemies of the player characters (see pp. 71–75, **SRComp**). And the Futuremen may return, if you want to give the player characters a second shot at the gang. Of course, the characters will have to convince their Lone Star bosses that they are capable of handling the job.

To wrap up this adventure, proceed to **Picking Up the Pieces.**

PICKING UP THE PIECES

Ideally, the characters will get back to the clinic before Cuca and company clean out the underground complex; they will arrest everyone involved in the Futuremen project and gather enough evidence to make a convincing legal case. If they manage to pull this off, Captain Burns and their fellow officers will be very pleased—the characters may even earn a commendation for their actions. However, the legal battle will drag on for months. Cuca and Powell may eventually be convicted, but Renraku's high-powered lawyers will succeed in plausibly denying any corporate knowledge or endorsement of "the actions of two renegade employees." Renraku press releases will describe Cuca and Powell as "misguided madmen whose actions are anathema to the enlightened policies of the Renraku corporate family," and the whole brouhaha will be quietly swept under the rug.

If the characters arrive too late to salvage any concrete evidence of the Futuremen project, their investigation won't be a total loss; the Futuremen's activities will cease, and Tanner and any other known gang survivors will be able to get their unwanted cyberware removed. The project will lie dormant for awhile, until Renraku quietly reopens it in another city. Seattle's streets, at least, will be a little safer. Temporarily.

Whatever happens with Dr. Cuca, the characters will have to deal with the repercussions of their actions during the investigation. If Tanner dies, especially at the characters' hands, the characters will come under investigation. They will certainly be reprimanded and may even be charged with his murder if the Star believes Tanner's death could have been avoided. The characters will also have to appear before Lone Star's board of inquiry and explain any unlawful entry, injury to civilians, damage to private property or other potentially illegal actions they took while on the case. Depending on the characters' reputations in the Star and the results they achieved, they may receive any penalty from a slap on the wrist to demotion, suspension, or even arrest. Tailor the punishment to fit the crime; the characters are not shadowrunners in this adventure so hold them to a higher standard of conduct.

Finally, the characters may notice that much of the computer equipment and cyberware confiscated from the Renraku complex and the Futuremen does not go immediately into the Star's evidence vaults as usual. Instead, the Star's Research and Development Division and Division of Psychology take possession of most of the material—to study it and devise methods to counteract such brainwashing in the future (at least, that's what they claim they're doing).

AWARDING KARMA

Award team Karma as outlined below. Award individual Karma according to the standard rules (p. 199, **SRII**).

Survival	1 point
Threat	3 points
Discovering that Cuca is behind the Futuremen	1 point
Getting enough evidence to prove it	1 point
Keeping Tanner alive	1 point

LEGWORK

The characters may want to ask their contacts about some of the major NPCs in the adventure. The following tables summarize the information they may be able to learn.

Characters may ask fellow Lone Star officers about Sergeant Tanner; they may also ask street contacts about Tanner's undercover ID as Frank "Leopard" Leonard. These lines of inquiry will give very different results, so use the appropriate table for each.

SERGEANT FRANCO TANNER

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 4)

Any Police contact.

Successes	Results
0	"Nah, the name doesn't ring a bell. Donut?"
1	"He's Organized Crime Division, isn't he? Undercover ops, somethin' like that? Hey, these pineapple-filled bismarcks are good—try one. I tell ya, anybody who can pull off undercover work for that long has to be one helluva cop."
2+	"Tanner's a good cop; good rep, clean record, got a couple of good busts under his belt without breaking cover. Probably makes big nuyen and earns every bit of it. Here, have a cruller."

FRANK "LEOPARD" LEONARD

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 4)

Any Street contact.

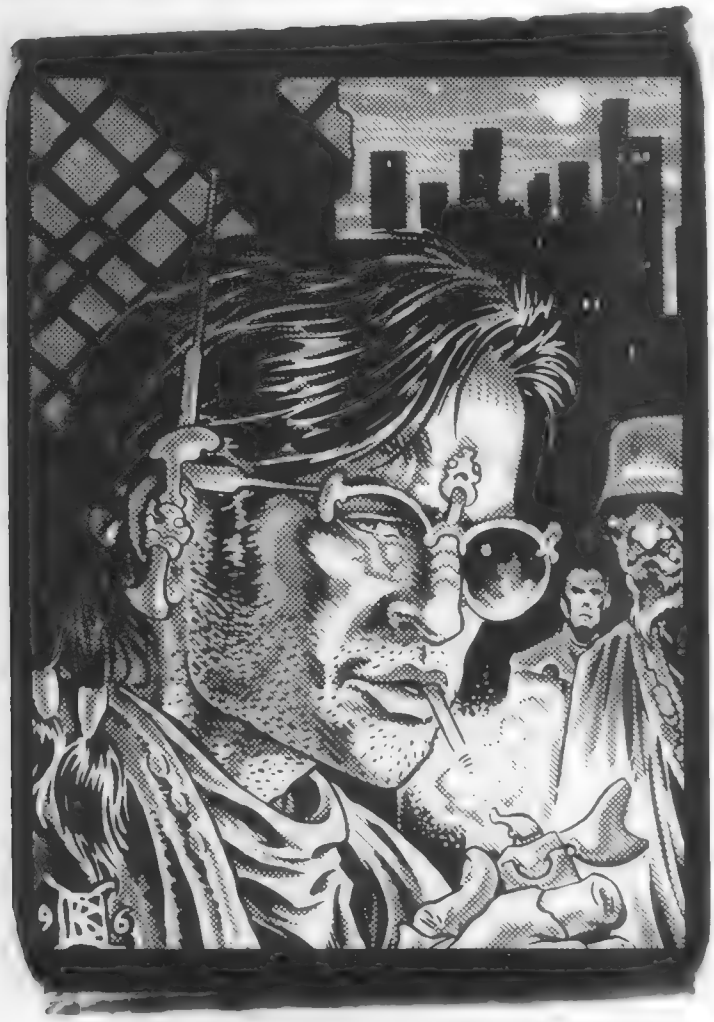
Successes	Results
0	"Sorry, chummer, never heard of 'im."
1	"He works with a couple of the downtown gangs, helps 'em get gear and make contacts that the street-punks can't handle by themselves."
2–3	"Leopard? Yeah, I just saw him yesterday. He's been askin' about them Futuremen a lot, maybe tryin' to get a piece of their action. Don't think he's had much luck, though."
4+	"Too many people around Leopard wind up gettin' busted while he gets away clean. You ask me, he's a yap for some Lone Star street-slot."

DR. CUCA

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 4)

Any Street contact.

Successes	Results
0	"I think he's a DJ at Sybrespace—you know, the decker club."
1–2	"He's a street doc over in Ravenna, I think. He's new to the biz, but people say he does good work at good prices."
3	"He operates out of a music store called MindSound Music. But keep it quiet, man, you know how hard it is to find a good street doc around here."
4+	"He must have a source at a hospital or corp somewhere, 'cause he's got all sorts of Grade-A chrome that most chop shops never see."



THE FUTUREMEN

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 4)

Any Gang or Street contact.

Successes	Results
0	"Future Man? Ain't he that drumitar player who disappeared back in '54?"
1	"Yeah, I've heard of the Futuremen. Hasn't everybody? They may get themselves splashed all over the eleven o'clock news, but we'll see how tough they are if they come onto our turf."
2–3	"Those fraggers must have some serious backing, 'cause they're packing more chrome than some runners I know. I dunno what they're up to, but I'm not about to cross 'em."
4+	"I knew one of the guys in that gang; saw him on the trid footage when they hit that strip mall in Northgate. I asked him about it, but he acted like he didn't know what I was talking about. I'd swear it was him, though. Two days later, he turns up dead. You ask me, there's something weird goin' on with that gang."

CAST OF SHADOWS

The NPCs below appear in order of their importance to the story.

SGT. FRANCO TANNER

An honest, hardworking, dedicated officer, Tanner has an excellent record of undercover work for Lone Star's anti-gang task force. He has managed to break up several major gang operations without blowing his street identity. His only real flaw is a tendency to rely too much on himself and not enough on the Star's resources; sometimes he subjects himself to huge risks to make a case. He lost the gamble this time and wound up as an unwitting member of the very gang he'd been sent to track down.

Attributes

Body: 4	Intelligence: 5
Quickness: 5	Willpower: 4
Strength: 4	Essence: 3.03
Charisma: 4	Reaction: 5 (6)

Initiative: 6 + 2D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 4/3 (2/4 when under Cuca's control)

Skills

Car: 2	Police Procedure: 4
Etiquette (Street): 5	Psychology 2 [Group Behavior 4]
Firearms: 4	Stealth: 4
Negotiation: 3	Unarmed Combat 3 [Subduing 5]

Cyberware

Boosted Reflexes (2)	Smartlink
Headware radio w/subdermal speakers, alpha-grade	Softlink (4), alpha-grade
Skillwires Plus (3)	

Gear

Browning Ultra-Power [Heavy Pistol, 10 (clip), SA, 9M] with concealed holster and 2 extra clips
Securetech Ultra-Vest (4/3)

DR. CUCA

Dr. Cuca is the street name taken by Dr. Claudio Andrade, a brilliant Amazonian expatriate whose research into simsense conditioning and cybernetic behavior modification would surely have made him one of his country's leading scientists if he had been a little more careful about how he obtained his research subjects. Unfortunately, when one of them turned out to be the cousin of the mayor of São Paulo, Andrade had to make a rapid exit from Amazonia. Renraku was more than happy to hire the doctor and transport him to the UCAS to continue his promising research.

The Futuremen operation is the first field test of Cuca's methods, and he is extremely excited about its potential. Like many scientists, he tends to overestimate the significance of his work while underestimating its real-world consequences; his mind, while brilliant, is narrowly focused. Though occasionally manic in his behavior, Cuca is not insane and should be portrayed as a clever opponent rather than a classic mad scientist.

Cuca does not have any cyberware; his work makes him all too aware of how easily cyber implants might be turned against him.

Attributes

Body: 3	Intelligence: 6
Quickness: 4	Willpower: 5
Strength: 2	Essence: 6
Charisma: 3	Reaction: 5

Initiative: 5 + 1D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 1/2

Skills

Biology 4 [Medicine 6]	Etiquette (Corporate): 3
Biotech 4	Interrogation: 4
[Transimplant Surgery 6]	Psychology: 7
Computer: 3	Unarmed Combat: 3
Cybertechnology: 6	

Gear
Wrist Computer with 800 Mp of memory

MARCUS POWELL

Powell is the chief Renraku officer in charge of the Futuremen project. He wants to climb the corporate ladder quickly, and so he tries to keep Cuca and the project staff under tight control. Powell spends much of his time in meetings off-site, trying to get more funding for his program and more glory for himself, but he still manages to turn up fairly often at the underground facility to keep a sharp eye on everyone and everything. He is not well liked by the project personnel, but he doesn't much care.

Attributes

Body: 3	Intelligence: 5
Quickness: 3	Willpower: 4
Strength: 3	Essence: 5.5
Charisma: 5 (7)	Reaction: 6

Initiative: 4 + 1D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 2/2
Body Index: 0.6

Skills
Computer: 4
Etiquette
(Corporate): 5 (7)
Firearms: 3
Leadership: 3 (5)
Negotiation: 4 (6)

Bioware
Tailored Pheromones (2)

Cyberware
Datajack (4) with 75 Mp of headware memory

Gear
Morrissey Elite [Heavy Pistol, 5 (clip), SA, 9M] with concealed holster
Vashon Island "Houndstooth" Armored Suit (3/3)
Telecom with 200 Mp of memory

MALPRACTICE

WONDERFUL NIGHT: A PROLOGUE

"Target approaching, sir," the voice said over the comm unit. The speaker sounded tense, but obviously still in control.

"Acknowledged, Panther One. Keep steady," Earl Brown replied. He adjusted his Ares Golgotha-7 smartgoggles and strained his ears until he too could hear the distant wail of a siren. From his vantage point on the third floor of the unfinished office building, he could make out most of the construction yard below. It was a moonless night, so he couldn't exactly see everything as if it were day, but the ambient glow of Seattle was bright enough to let him pick out details. He could even see Panther Team, crouching behind the massive bulldozer only ten meters from the edge of the drainage ditch around the site.

The siren was closer now. He could just make out rapid flashes of blue light on the sides of buildings to the northeast. "Team Panther and Team Gentry, you have yellow. Repeat, you have yellow. Team Equinox, activate sequence oh-five-niner Bravo."

He removed the goggles and waited, watching the street beyond the huge, open gates to the site. Equations burned through his head as he calculated and instinctively corrected for wind speed and distance. He took a deep breath and exhaled slowly, reassured by the ice-cold logic and clarity of the numbers.

The ambulance's wheels screeched as it took the turn at 50 kph, sirens screaming and lights flashing. As its front wheels touched one end of the gravel bridge that spanned the drainage ditch, Earl whispered, "Fire one."

A dull roar and a hiss came from his left. Earl kept his eyes on a spot at the other end of the bridge, on the small scrap of metal he'd placed there fifteen minutes ago. The rocket screamed through the air in a gentle arc from the second floor. It slammed into the ground and detonated, dead center in Earl's field of vision. The ambulance slowed and swerved away from the blast.

"Fire two!" Earl shouted over the explosion, already looking toward the left side of the bridge where a second scrap of metal lay. Another roar and a hiss split the night as the second rocket sped towards its target. The impact showered gravel for meters around the spot.

The ambulance tried to swerve out of danger, but the force of the blast lifted the vehicle's right side off the ground. It balanced for an instant on its left wheels; then it tipped and rolled off the bridge. It slammed to the dirt, skidded, and came to rest against the far wall of the ditch.

"Team Panther and Team Gentry, you have green. Repeat, you have green."

He watched the men emerge from behind the construction equipment and fan out near the edge of the ditch. Some moved into position on what remained of the bridge, their rifles at the ready. Sporadic popping echoed from below as they fired on the ambulance, focusing their attack on the vehicle's exposed underside. Earl picked up the Barret and repositioned his smartgoggles. He aimed for the crumpled form at the base of the building and fired once. The form jerked wildly, then lay still.

"Bait has been discarded. Team Equinox, you have black. Repeat, you have black. See you at the rendezvous in thirty minutes." Earl didn't wait for acknowledgement; he didn't need to. Quickly and carefully, he broke down the rifle and placed it in its case. After taking a last look around to make sure he'd left nothing behind, he headed toward the workman's elevator.

"Teams Panther and Gentry, what's our status?" he murmured as he walked into the freight lift and pressed the Down button.

"Targets neutralized, sir. Thermal imaging shows the only heat sources in the ambulance as cooling bodies or cooling metal."

"Good job, Panther One. Teams Panther and Gentry, meet at the rendezvous in forty minutes. Stagger your arrival and watch for tails. Congratulations."

Earl removed the earpiece and slipped it into his pocket as he strode through the workman's gate behind the building. Whistling, he deposited his gear in the back of the rented Jackrabbit. Maybe he'd take in a movie after the rendezvous; it seemed like the right way to celebrate such a wonderful night.

INTRODUCTION

In **Malpractice**, the player characters are hired by a former DocWagon paramedic to infiltrate DocWagon and discover the identity of an employee who has been selling medical records and DNA samples to a mysterious outside interest. Disguised as DocWagon Temporary Response Personnel (TRP), the characters experience the rigorous life of DocWagon High Threat Response Team members firsthand. When they uncover the mole, things get worse as the group paying the traitor attempts to retaliate.

Robert Khamdeng, hired in 2043 as a paramedic for DocWagon's first Seattle branch, swiftly established a reputation for dedication and heroism. He received frequent fines and demerits from his superiors for rescuing non-clients suffering from serious injuries. Eventually, KNUS caught wind of this terrific human-interest story, and featured "Doctor Bob" in a nationwide "Korp Kudos" segment in late 2047. The rest of the media jumped on the bandwagon; soon "Doctor Bob" was on the cover of Time-Ares and featured on local affiliates all across the UCAS. Fifteen minutes of fame later, Bob was still a DocWagon paramedic who cared more about saving people than serving clients.

In September of 2054, almost seven years later, a man named Brown approached Bob and made him a proposal. In return for

DEAD
EYE

medical records of DocWagon clients—specifically, DNA records and samples—Brown would pay Bob hefty chunks of cred and make him a member of Brown's organization. Figuring that the enigmatic Brown wanted the records and samples for an unsavory reason, Bob told him where he could stick his proposal and his organization. Three days later, Bob's team answered a "routine" High Threat Response call that turned out to be an ambush laid by Brown. Bob was the sole survivor, by virtue of sheer dumb luck. He realized that Brown and his organization—whoever they were—had more power than he'd thought, and that he dared not return to his job or his home unless he wanted a quick death. He laid low for awhile, hoping people would think he had died in the burning wreckage of the DocWagon Citymaster. He watched his back for further assassination attempts, and eventually joined a shadowrunning team to make ends meet. He has worked in Seattle's shadows ever since, and has never given up trying to pay Brown back for killing his friends and colleagues.

Recently, Bob received information indicating that he was not Brown's only contact in the High Threat Response Team division. Another paramedic appeared to have accepted Brown's offer in 2054, and that person was allegedly still working for Brown from within the relative safety of an HTR team. Upon hearing of this, Bob contacted his old friend Elizabeth Yamato in DocWagon's Internal Security Division. Yamato did some digging on her own and found the one HTR team that had been around since 2054: Team Three, which was going on Expert Duty in less than a week. Bob devised a plan to hire freelancers to discover the culprit, to which Liz readily agreed. The player characters are the first group of runners that Bob has approached; if they take the job, they must discover the identity of the mole and find out about the mysterious group that Brown represents.

Malpractice introduces the player characters to the high-energy, fast-action life of a DocWagon High Threat Response team (see pp. 110–13, **The Shadowrun Companion: Beyond the Shadows**). This adventure is designed to let shadowrunner characters become temporary DocWagon personnel. Suggestions for smoothly integrating **Malpractice** with a larger DocWagon campaign are included at the end of **Behind the Scenes** in each encounter.

This adventure is also intended to introduce a powerful, active and vengeful Enemy into the player characters' lives (see **Picking Up the Pieces,** p. 45). This Enemy can show up in whatever future campaigns the gamemaster and players desire. Rules for running an Enemy appear on pp. 71–75 of **The Shadowrun Companion.**

GETTING STARTED

Players and gamemasters who wish to use **Malpractice** as a one-shot adventure can use the standard **Shadowrun** rules on page 112 of **SRComp** to create DocWagon characters, or the characters can start out as shadowrunners and become DocWagon experts during the course of the adventure.

If the characters are already DocWagon employees, Liz Yamato recruits them for this mission. Liz will use the recently formed Temporary Response Personnel (TRP) Program as an excuse to get a well-rounded team into place (see below). If the player characters are shadowrunners, then the encounter **Train in Vain** will give them a crash course in how not to look like a runner while working for DocWagon.

Malpractice is set in Seattle, but can be relocated to any major city served by DocWagon. If the gamemaster prefers an alternative to DocWagon, this adventure will work with any mobile health-care provider. DocWagon operates in Seattle and throughout the UCAS, and has granted large corporations in the CAS, California Free State and some of the NAN nations the right to franchise DocWagon-style operations (though they cannot use the DocWagon name, for insanely complicated legal reasons). For more information about DocWagon, see pages 41–47 of **The Neo-Anarchist's Guide to Real Life.** Though the gamemaster may find additional information about the workings of DocWagon useful, the **Neo-Anarchist's Guide** is not required to run this adventure.

PLAYING THE MEDICS

Though as much a part of the **Shadowrun** universe as Stuffer Shacks, crazed trolls with big guns and dead dragons, DocWagon is also among the most misunderstood elements of **Shadowrun.** Most players and gamemasters think of a DocWagon team as a sort of "deus ex machina" that swoops in, grabs a severely injured customer and gets out fast. What the DocWagon team actually has to deal with, blow by blow, rarely comes up. **Malpractice** gives a good introduction to the adrenaline-pumped lives of High Threat Response teams—what happens before they get to ground zero, at ground zero and on the road to a clinic. This adventure should give the players a greater understanding of how these paramedics par excellence function in the **Shadowrun** universe.

In most adventures, the shadowrunners are hired to take out any opposition. If someone else goes down, so be it—their tough luck for getting in the way. DocWagon works on a whole different level. DocWagon personnel are out there trying to save lives, usually risking their own to do it. There is no cease-fire in the shadows while the DocWagon team runs in to pick up a client; in fact, many times a DocWagon HTR team must go in with guns blazing just to reach the patient. And in the past couple of years, things have gotten even more dangerous than they used to be in **Shadowrun's** mean streets.

TRP PROGRAM

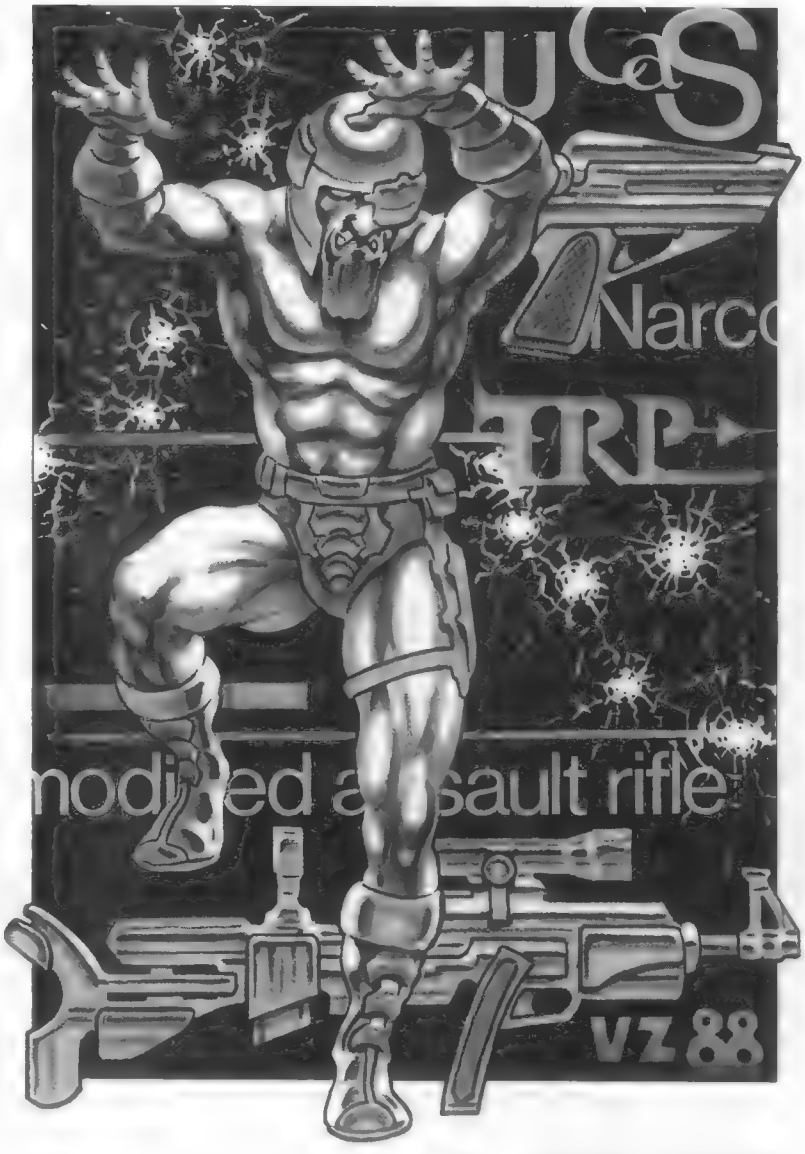
Ever since the Election of 2056, the shadows have gotten more and more violent—and DocWagon's business has boomed. Terrorist attacks, riots and a greater fear of the incredible, ultimately unpredictable power wielded by magic-users led many people to purchase DocWagon contracts. This windfall for the ol' corporate coffers, however, has made life tough for the paramedics and Threat Support personnel. As the numbers of clients increased, the value of experienced paramedics skyrocketed to an all-time high. Knowing that it had to protect its most valuable assets, DocWagon created the Temporary Response Personnel program in late August of 2057 to supplement the corporation's manpower on the streets.

The TRP program sought out people with experience in personal security, rudimentary paramedic training and/or piloting skills. After a three-week basic training course, the TRPs are integrated into existing DocWagon High Threat Response teams wherever necessary. Each group of TRPs serves with its assigned HTR team for two weeks.

Though the TRP program is a success as far as the corporate board of directors is concerned, the attitude of a typical HTR team member toward a "terp" is ambivalent at best. Medical personnel have voiced concern that DocWagon is hiring "mercenaries," and that the TRP program is potentially a massive security risk. Consequently, background checks for anyone entering the TRP program are slightly less thorough than those performed on mid-level government employees—in other words, very stringent indeed. DocWagon plans to continue the TRP program on a trial basis until August of 2058, at which point the corp will decide whether or not to make it official policy.

In game terms, a TRP can be a shadowrunner who has undergone a crash course in protecting the full-fledged paramedics. That training includes setting up a perimeter, providing cover (and in some cases a target) and enough Biotech Skill to make sure the client survives when the drek hits the fan.

When a character becomes a TRP, he or she automatically gains the Registered Equipment Edge (see p. 34, **SRComp**). A TRP also receives weapons from DocWagon's registered weapons list. The gamemaster may create this list, but it should only include weapons that can take gel or stun rounds. A TRP may also be assigned any special weapon of the gamemaster's choosing, including Narcojects, tasers and various shock or stun weapons (shock gloves, net guns, and so on). Each TRP is given one round of real ammo for his or her weapon of choice; the ammo is confiscated when the HTR team returns from its mission. If the TRP uses the ammo round, he or she must give a full account of the circumstances to the folks back at the DocWagon office. If the TRP hit someone with the ammo, the HTR team must bring that person in for treatment in addition to the client (it's good PR, and great for the company lawyers). TRPs may have other survival equipment as the gamemaster sees fit. Aside from the fact that it must be registered, there is no restriction on cyberware for TRPs.



A TYPICAL SHIFT

An emergency medical team doesn't work 9 to 5 and then go home; instead, each team is assigned a shift. A typical DocWagon shift consists of 4 weeks on and 6 weeks off. On-shift DocWagon personnel live in the DocWagon facilities and are on 24-hour call.

In reality, however, High Threat Response teams only spend two weeks on EMT duty. They spend the other two weeks training people who want to work for the HTR division, evaluating Standard Response Teams for possible HTR candidates, and filling in on STRs or even clinic duty.

If a team works well together professionally and personally, they tend to stay together. Most teams disband when one of their teammates leaves or is promoted; the others move to new teams or into other divisions.

Each HTR is assigned its own territory and given its assignments on the first day of duty. DocWagon likes to give its teams defined areas because the paramedics find it a lot easier to get rapidly into and out of places they know. Assigned areas are much larger for HTRs than STRs because fewer High Threat situations than "normal" situations occur on any given day (if any situation in which DocWagon is called can be called normal). Expert Teams, on the other hand, are floaters. They serve as back-up to the other on-duty HTRs. They have no specific territory; they go anywhere served by the clinic for which they work. Expert Teams also get sent to other clinics when something gets completely out of hand. Any number of Expert Teams may be on duty at any given time. Being on an Expert Team is not a promotion from a regular HTR team.

The typical HTR team pulls Expert duty once every four shifts. **Malpractice** begins on day one of Expert Team Three's shift.

RESPONSE TEAM VEHICLES

DocWagon's standard complement of vehicles has changed during the past five years. The Hughes WK-2 Stallion, the "workhorse" of DocWagon's aerial fleet, was phased out in the fall of 2056. The Osprey II has become the standard workhorse, though many DocWagon personnel complain that it is too lightly armored for the situations it encounters. Rumors abound of a prototype VTOL/VSTOL allegedly being built by a company well known for reliable tilt-wing rotor craft, but if the rumors have any truth to them, DocWagon is keeping a tight lid on the name of the licensee.

The modified Citymasters used by High Threat Response teams have also seen changes. An upgraded autopilot system allows the Citymaster to make course corrections on its own should the rigger be otherwise occupied. Teams most often use this feature when returning from calls, so that the paramedic/rigger can stabilize a patient or fully concentrate on firing the Citymaster's machine guns at pursuing vehicles. The Citymasters currently being used are the 2055 models, with a slightly larger chassis and more room in the rear compartment. This change is reflected in the vehicle's higher Body rating. As of 31 December 2057, half the Citymasters in service are 2055 models; the others are the standard Modified Citymasters listed on page 98 of **The Neo-Anarchist's Guide to Real Life.** In **Malpractice,** the player characters head out in a 2055 Citymaster.

If an HTR with TRPs is larger than the maximum five "extra" seats available (meaning a group of six or more), the team will be assigned two vehicles. The non-player characters split up, two NPCs to each vehicle. If the player-character group does not include a rigger to drive the second vehicle, DocWagon will provide one. For statistics, use the rigger archetype (p. 59, **SRII**) and add the following skills: Biotech 4 and a skill rating of 6 in whatever vehicle the DocWagon rigger needs to pilot.

Modified Citymaster (2055)

Handling	Speed	Body	Armor	Signature	APilot
4/10	35/140	5	6	2	4

Seating: Twin bucket seats **Access:** 2 standard + 1 rear hatch
Economy: 11 km per liter **Fuel:** IC/500 liters
Storage: 28 CF in storage compartments
Additional Features: The rear area, inaccessible from the driver compartment, contains medical gear and a two-patient treatment area. There is enough space for two medical attendants to care for the patients; four fold-down seats accommodate the remainder of the team or passengers.

The turret, operable from the driver area, mounts twin light machine guns loaded with gel rounds [LMG, 1,000 rounds, FA, 5S Stun]. Use one-half recoil modifiers because of the hardpoint mounting.

Osprey II

Handling	Speed	Body	Armor	Signature	APilot
5	190/380	3	3	2	3

Seating: Twin bucket seats **Access:** 1 + 1 modified rear access
Economy: 3 km per liter* **Fuel:** IC/600 liters
Storage: 6 CF storage + 6 CF cargo
Landing/Takeoff Profile: VTOL/VSTOL
*VTOL Economy 1 km/liter
Additional Features: The rear area, inaccessible from the driver compartment, contains medical gear and a two-patient treatment area. There is enough space for two medical attendants and three fold-down seats for the remaining team members or passengers, though the compartment does get cramped. The vehicle mounts two hardpoints, usually fitted with M107 GP heavy machine guns loaded with gel rounds [HMG, 1,000 rounds, FA, 8S Stun]. Other weapons can be mounted to meet the needs of specific situations.

WHO'S THE MOLE?

This adventure is set up to finger Shawn Ferrer, a longtime DocWagon employee, as Brown's mole. The player characters are highly unlikely to suspect him initially; he excels at his job, he's been skillfully stealing information for Brown for years, and his teammates never appear to question any anything he does. Ferrer has opportunity, patience and lots of practice in stealing DNA samples and turning them over personally to Brown. He will not change his standard operating procedure when the player characters arrive, because he has no reason to do so.

Brown recruited Shawn Ferrer soon after Bob Khamdeng's presumed death. Having learned from his mistake with Bob, Brown made a much more thorough background check on Shawn before approaching him. He found out that Shawn was a dwarf who had undergone cosmetic surgery to appear human. (The gamemaster can give Shawn the Human-Looking Flaw; see p. 32, **SRComp.**) In their initial meeting, Brown intended to confront Shawn with this deep dark secret, intending to blackmail him with it should he reject Brown's offer. First, however, Brown tried a more diplomatic approach. He told Shawn that his organization needed DNA information mostly from metahuman clients so that his people could understand and hopefully control a subject's genes. Shawn immediately asked Brown if he and his organization could figure out how to "make him all human," and Brown promised him that he would the first to be "become human again" as soon as the organization completed its research. Shawn agreed to help Brown, and has been funneling information Brown's way for the past three years.

Each gamemaster should decide if Shawn is the real mole in their game or just a screwed-up dwarf. **Malpractice** is written so that the gamemaster can customize the villain as he or she sees fit. Any of the paramedics in Expert Team Three could be the mole. For example, Brown could be blackmailing Gordon over Gordon's stimulant habit, which he funds by selling DocWagon equipment. Or Brown might have told Viv, a trusting and caring person, that his organization plans to use the stolen DNA samples to cure VITAS-3. Seth might aid Brown without knowing or caring who he is and what his plans are, because Seth sees any progress as good even if it means that people will suffer in the short term. It is even possible that all four of the paramedics are in on the scam together, which would allow any of them to distract the player characters from the truth if they sense that the player characters are more than they seem.

A gamemaster who chooses a different mole than Shawn will also need to customize the clues to fit the chosen villain. The specific identity of Brown's organization is also left up to the gamemaster, so that it can dovetail with any major threat the gamemaster is currently using in his or her campaign. The organization will play to the mole's weaknesses, offering him or her cash, power, BTLs, sex or anything else the mole wants … all of which can become blackmail fodder if the mole should have second thoughts. Some likely organizations appear in the **Threats** sourcebook; however, Brown can be working for anyone from a major megacorp to a new player on the genetic-research front to the UCAS government to a secret cabal of mantis spirits. The gamemaster may use whatever resources he or she has available to make Brown's organization really scary.

NEVER DEAL WITH THE WAGON

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

"Mama, look! Look at the boats!" The little boy collides with your leg in his haste to reach the window, then steps back and gapes at you. His eyes widen as he takes you all in, but he seems more surprised than frightened. Then he smiles and points at the wall of glass that overlooks Pier 60. "Didja see the boats?"

"Ricky! Ricky Ho, come here!"

A woman, presumably Ricky's mother, grabs the boy's hand and pulls him behind her. She stares at you as if you've just grown a second head. "I apologize for my son's rudeness. He is such a nuisance! Please forgive him," she stammers, trying to back away from you while keeping herself between you and her son. She departs swiftly, child in tow, and does not look back. All around you men and women in suits stare furtively at you while pretending to ignore you. You can sense them watching you out of the corners of their eyes as you make your way through the tables.

You spot the guy who must be "Morphine" at a large booth. The table in front of him is loaded with enough food to feed an entire family. He wears a faded T-shirt that reads "Sonics in 53!" and faded jeans. As you approach, he looks up at you and smiles. "Hoi! I'm glad that you came. Sit down, sit down! There's no way I'll be able to finish this off by myself. I wasn't sure what you'd like, so I ordered two of everything." He picks up a stack of cups and hands one to each of you. "The drink machine is to the left of the counter. Help yourself and then dig in! These synthfoam containers can only keep the food warm for so long, you know!"

When the runners stop socializing and want to get down to business, read the following:

Bob takes a bite of his cherry pie and leans forward, composing himself. "First of all, I need your help. My profession is the same as yours, but I can't count on my regulars for what I need done. They'd be linked to me, and for this operation I need unknowns. That's where you come in. I heard some buzz about you, most of it good, so I did a little digging. I think you'll be perfect for what I have in mind.

"You'll be doing some undercover work. I'll supply the identities; you fill their nonexistent boots. You'll be working in one of the lesser megacorps for about a week, if all goes well—a little longer if it doesn't. I can guarantee you airtight cover IDs—they can only be blown if you make a mistake. As long as you stay in character, nobody will suspect a thing."

He finishes the pie and wipes his mouth with his napkin. "I'm sure you're interested in payment. I won't give you an exact figure until you accept, but let's just say that the non-monetary benefits plus the nuyen I can give you will more than double the value of my offer." He winks as he scrapes up the last scrap of pie.

"If you think you won't be able to do this, I understand," he continues. "There's a certain amount of preparation involved, so it's kind of long-term. But you need to finish in four weeks, or the window of opportunity closes. If you don't want the job, then finish your lunch and leave when you want. I'm going to go get more pie while you talk it over. I'll be back in five minutes." He excuses himself and heads toward the line at the ordering counter.

If the player characters accept the offer, read the following:

Bob smiles as he attacks his second piece of pie. "I had a feeling you'd be up for it. All right—before I fill you in completely, I need to tell you a little about myself. My name is Robert Khamdeng. Before I started running the shadows, I worked as a paramedic for DocWagon. Some people called me Doctor Bob. You might've heard of me … ." He trails off, looking for a sign of recognition from you, then shakes his head with a grin. "Never mind. It's not important. Where was I? Oh, yeah. About three years ago I was approached by a man who called himself Brown. He wanted me to supply him with DNA samples and medical histories of various DocWagon clients. He said that his interests coincided with mine and that he would double my yearly salary should I accept. He didn't tell me much else—just hinted at things and left me to fill in the blanks. Now that I've spent some time running the shadows, I recognize plausible deniability when I see it, but back then I just thought he was being coy.

"Now, I figured something was wrong about him. Very wrong. I have this gut feeling whenever people lie to me or try to cover something up, and right about then my alarm bells were ringing left and right. I knew something was up and that I wanted no part of it, so I told him where he could stick his offer. He didn't seem too pleased, but I could've given a frag less. That was the last time I saw Mr. Brown.

"Three days later, I got switched to a rookie paramedic team. I was supposed to show them the ropes for the following week. I'd done this in the past, so I didn't think much of it. Two days later we went on our first call."

Bob frowns and looks down at his hands. In a quieter voice, he continues. "I was the only survivor of that call. It was a set-up, of course. I survived by blind luck, but I let people think I'd died. If Brown and his goons—whoever they are—had realized that I was still alive, they just would have tried to kill me again. So I dropped out of my own life and called in a few favors with some chummers I'd saved a few years back. That led to an identity change and my new career in the shadows."

He looks up again and smiles; this time, it seems forced. "I thought that was the end of it. Unfortunately, I was wrong. Recently I came across some information that scared the drek out of me. It seems I wasn't the only member of my team to be approached. Brown talked to somebody else who didn't turn him down. I don't know who it is, or who Brown represents, but I have my suspicions. So I need you to pose as Temporary Response Personnel, the guys you always see protecting DocWagon paramedics on the trid. I have a friend in DocWagon's Internal Security Division who'll help you out, running you through the basics of TRP training. She'll be your contact throughout the operation. You'll be assigned to Expert Team Three—they're a roving team that fills in whenever a High Threat Response team in some area or another is otherwise occupied.

"There's four paramedics on the team, all experts in their field. I'm sure one of them is the mole. While you're posing as TRPs, you need to find proof that one of them is selling information to Brown or his associates. If you're real lucky you might catch them transferring the DNA, but that probably won't happen. You'll have to rely mainly on conversation and digging up information. Also, if you can confirm for me exactly who Brown's associates are, I'd be very grateful. Just be careful not to show your hand too early, or this whole thing will go down the drekker.

"About your pay—I'm paying for this out of my own pocket, so I can't afford to shell out too much nuyen. Most of my cred already went into providing the training and faked documents for whoever takes this job. But I can offer each of you a new SIN and a registered DocWagon Platinum contract good for two years—plus, as a DocWagon employee, you'll be pulling down about 1,000 nuyen a week. DocWagon'll also give you food and housing during your duty tour. And along with the SINs goes the equipment registered to them, so you'll get to keep some of your official DocWagon gear—you know, the cool jacket and hat and armor. If you find the mole and prove it to DocWagon, I can get an extra 15,000 nuyen to split up among you. I'll even buy you all lunch again when the job's done. You know, if you turn out to be good at this, DocWagon might keep you on—and that's good nuyen." He smiles and sips his drink. "So, are you free in two days?"

HOOKS

The runners should feel way out of place—it's mid-day, they're in a family restaurant and the only danger around is twice-thawed soymeat. They're meeting for biz in a world to which they don't really belong; they should feel awkward, even alien. Play up the veiled looks that the sararimen shoot their way, the concerned glances from the four security guards, and the outright stares of the children in the place.

If a particular runner is especially outlandish—maybe he has pink and green hair, red eyes and a third cyberarm—single him out and lay it on thick. However, remember to pick on all of the players eventually; unless they're wearing a nice suit or this year's line of casual clothing, they will all attract attention.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Malpractice begins with a call from one of the runners' street contacts informing them that a person by the name of Morphine is trying to get in touch with them. Morphine has left the contact a message to pass along, stating that he will be at You Should Not Eat So Much! in two days at 1210 hours and that he will buy lunch if the runners decide to join him. The message also says that Morphine will be wearing a "Sonics in 53!" T-shirt and have a drekload of food at his table. If the runners ask their contacts any questions about Bob, refer to the table for Morphine (**Legwork,** p. 46) to see how much the contact knows.

The contact who initially approaches the runners will not be a fixer. Bob has intentionally avoided fixers, preferring to hire the runners directly. He knows that information is the name of the game in the shadows and has attempted to set up an unorthodox meet in order to keep his name out of the shadow community's rumor mill. Bob was taught that the best place to hide something is in the open, which is why he chose a public fast food restaurant for the meet. Though his logic may not be completely sound, Bob and the runners have nothing to fear in You Should Not Eat So Much! unless they start trouble themselves.

As the runners eat, Bob will refuse to talk business; instead, he attempts to get to know them. He will start an easygoing conversation, staying away from such touchy subjects as the runners' pasts or jobs they've done, and focus on general topics such as sports, music and movies. Bob is a diehard Supersonics fan and will rattle off names, statistics and season outcomes if the runners give him the slightest encouragement. When it comes to music, he will talk about "Murphy's L.A.W.," a relatively new band that releases its music to the Matrix at no cost. If the players seem interested, he will give them a Grid address where they can retrieve the latest album. He will also talk about how campy the latest Ramboid flick was, going on about the part where Ramboid feeds one of the bad guys plastique and then knocks him into an electric fence, and will explain why something like that should turn somebody into large melon-sized lumps instead of chunky salsa. He'll describe the scene pretty graphically, partly because exposed innards stopped bothering him years ago, but mostly to judge the runners' reactions. He wants to find out how hardened they are to death and injury, but wants to be subtle in his approach.

When the runners tire of idle chitchat, read the second section in **Tell It To Them Straight.** Bob will give them a general rundown about the job and then let them talk it over for a few minutes. If they accept, read the third section. Bob will not bargain for a higher pay rate; if necessary, he can remind them that he specifically avoided contacting them through their fixer, which means that they get to keep the fixer's usual percentage of the fee. Before he leaves, Bob tells the runners to meet his friend Liz outside DocWagon's Clinic in Renton. He says she will be in a DocWagon Citymaster with the numbers 264-10 stenciled on the sides. She will mention his code name of Morphine in conversation. The runners are to respond by mentioning the Sonics. If the player characters think to ask Bob for details on the ambush set to kill him, he will tell them what happened to him as described in the **Prologue** (p. 26), but from his perspective in the rear section of the Citymaster.

DOCWAGON CAMPAIGN SUGGESTIONS

If the player characters already work for DocWagon, the request to meet Morphine will come from Liz Yamato, Bob's friend who works for DocWagon's Internal Security Division. She will tell them where to meet Bob and inform them that they are needed to help stop a "grave threat" to DocWagon's security. She won't tell them anything else, but will make them realize that keeping silent about the situation is imperative.

When the player characters arrive at You Should Not Eat So Much!, read the first section as written, but when they question Bob about why he got in touch with them, jump straight to the "If the player characters accept" section. Ignore the final paragraph of that section; they aren't shadowrunners, they're either paramedics or Threat Response personnel. In either case, this is an assignment rather than a job offer.

DEBUGGING

If the runners have no street contacts, they will receive a call from a corporate contact; in this case, answers to any questions about Bob should come from the Doctor Bob/Robert Khamdeng table on p. 46 of the **Legwork** section.

Experienced shadowrunners—those who've been around long enough to change the classic **Shadowrun** street adage to "Never trust a Johnson"—may be put off by this entire encounter. If the runners refuse to eat with Bob, or attempt to use bargaining tactics on him before he explains what he wants them to do, he will finish his food, apologize for wasting their time and leave. He is trying to hire a group of runners that he can count on to do a job, but if they won't bother to show him a little courtesy, he doesn't want anything to do with them. If the runners apologize for their manners, Bob will remain, but won't be as friendly with them.

Bob's refusal to bargain is most likely the touchiest part of this encounter. Most players are used to having their characters milk Johnsons for everything they can get, but Bob simply doesn't have more nuyen at his disposal. He's spent almost all of his money on setting up false SINs and training for the job (see **Train In Vain**), and he can't afford to pay the runners any more than his initial offer. He will tell them as much, stating that "my name is Khamdeng, not Johnson. I'm as poor as you are; I don't have corp funding to back me up." But a local trid station has gotten a faint whiff of "something going on in DocWagon," and promised him 20,000 nuyen if he comes out with his own story plus the story of the DocWagon mole. From this 20,000 Bob will pay the runners an extra 15,000 if they succeed. If the runners press hard for something more, Bob will throw in his third-row season pass to the Seattle Supersonics to the player character doing the pushing, though he won't be happy about it.

TRAIN IN VAIN

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

The Redmond DocWagon clinic looks just like every other one—too white, too clean and smelling of the sick, injured and dead. The Citymaster is just where Doctor Bob said it would be, with 264-10 emblazoned across it. A dwarf woman leans against its door. So far, so good. The street isn't too busy, and no one seems to be going up to the woman. Looks like a clean, smooth first contact. (So something's just gotta go wrong ... .)

When the runners cross the street, read the following:

The woman looks up at you as you approach. "Any of you need a shot of Morphine?" she asks. Her husky, sexy voice catches you by surprise.

"Only to see the Sonics," you answer.

"Get in," she says. "It's time to make you into spies."

HOOKS

This encounter is simple and straightforward—the player characters get a crash course in the DocWagon way. Liz's job is to turn the player characters into an adequate Temporary Response team in 48 hours, a much shorter time than the three weeks TRPs usually spend in training camp. She takes her job seriously and knows exactly what risks she's running. One wrong move by the player characters and she loses everything—DocWagon's security, the chance to catch the mole, and probably her job as well.

BEHIND THE SCENES

When the runners arrive at the Renton Clinic, Liz introduces herself and lets them into the Citymaster. She then heads for an apparently abandoned warehouse just west of the Federated Boeing Shipyards, where she will run the characters through a quick version of DocWagon TRP training.

The details of the training are left up to the gamemaster, if he or she wishes to put the player characters through it. Suggestions for a training scenario appear as optional encounters under **Sleepless In Seattle** (p. 42), or the gamemaster can design his own. If the gamemaster uses an optional encounter, assume that Liz has hired people to run the training scenario (though the player characters don't need to know this).

Alternatively, Liz may hook up the player characters to a Virtual Training system she set up at the warehouse before the runners arrived. The Virtual Training system is part of regular TRP training, but Liz only had access to an older version. It can be hooked up to any datajack or to the standard "trode"—virtual reality helmets and gloves for the datajack-impaired. The gamemaster can set up any scenario he or she wants to as the training sequence.

If time is a concern, the gamemaster can choose not to play out the two days of training; however, the gamemaster should let the players know that their characters learned the following rules:

1. Protect the paramedics. If they can't work, clients die and DocWagon loses money. You are expendable. They are not.

2. Set up a perimeter around the doctors, using the Citymaster as the center point.

3. At least one TRP must accompany each paramedic on his or her run to the patient/client.

4. Rescuing non-clients is not a priority, but is allowed as long as it does not place the life of the client or of your teammates in jeopardy.

5. Always use non-lethal force when dealing with opposition.

6. Don't fire unless fired upon.

7. Use real ammo only as a last resort, or in a life-and-death situation.

8. If you injure someone with real ammo, you must bring them to the clinic whether they want to come or not.

After they have completed the training scenarios, the player characters qualify for a temporary DocWagon Etiquette Skill 2. This skill can be used for any situation regarding the above "rules of engagement," as well as any other appropriate situation that comes up (hanging out at the clinic, figuring out internal DocWagon procedures, making specialty maneuvers out on a call, and so on). Because the skill level is temporary, player characters should use the skill only to help them "remember" what they learned from Liz and in their training. The gamemaster should use the Etiquette skill to tell the players what DocWagon policy would recommend in a similar situation, but should not tell them what to do. Players can spend Karma at the end of the adventure to keep the DocWagon Etiquette skill; if they choose not to, they lose the knowledge they've picked up until they experience a similar training situation.

Once the players have been adequately trained, Liz outfits them with standard Threat Response Personnel equipment, as well as providing each with a false SIN. The gamemaster can come up with elaborate backgrounds for each SIN if he or she so desires. All TRPs have call signs, much like runners' street names; these are the names by which the DocWagon non-player characters in **Malpractice** will call them. The gamemaster is encouraged to use his or her imagination when coming up with call signs.

THE DOCWAGON KIT

Standard DocWagon gear includes the DocWagon uniform, hat and an Armor Jacket (5/3), plus a DocWagon Kit carried by all non-paramedics. The kit contains five slap patches of each type and rating, a medkit and a Narcoject pistol or rifle. The Narcoject guns use the Narcoject toxin listed on p. 186, **SRII.** The player characters can choose which Narcoject weapon they want, and they will be given one clip of gel rounds. They can get more at the clinic, along with defensive accessories like flash and smoke grenades.

Liz will also need an inventory of the player characters' cyberware and bioware so that she can make their cover IDs as legitimate as possible. The player characters may lie, but Liz is no idiot; if she sees a player character do something in the training missions that seems boosted or improved or otherwise the result of augmentation, she will note it. The gamemaster can decide whether or not she tells the character she has done so. Player characters who do not already have an internal radio/receiver will receive external radios. Those with internal headware will need to get the DocWagon radio frequency. DocWagon maintains various bands for its response teams, and it is standard operating procedure for them to re-calibrate anyone with headware once that person checks in for duty. DocWagon personnel are experts at this job and can do it quickly and painlessly.

DOCWAGON AND MAGICIANS

DocWagon wants to keep its magicians alive. In order to expand their market and offer more specific protection for magically active clients and employees, they have done their research on the weak link in a magician's armor—namely, astral space. DocWagon therefore insists that its TRPs (as well as any magically active paramedics) carry only one bonded foci on their person at any given time, though they may carry an unlimited number of expendable fetishes.

FINAL NOTES

Liz will constantly remind the runners about their mission, and will bring up anything that may be considered suspicious activity on the part of Expert Team Three. She will demonstrate proper procedures, let the players know what isn't kosher, and will explain the importance of plugging the DocWagon leak to anyone willing to listen. DocWagon has no idea who or what is using the stolen information and samples, but loose DNA is a fragging scary prospect no matter what. (Any magician will agree to that.)

When the player characters finish their training, Liz loads them into the Citymaster and heads for DocWagon's 83rd Street Clinic. Go to **Spies Like Us,** p. 35.

DOCWAGON CAMPAIGN SUGGESTIONS

Unless this is their first adventure, it is assumed that DocWagon player characters do not need to go through training. Feel free to skip this encounter and go directly to **Spies Like Us.** If the player characters are DocWagon newbies who've never been through a training scenario, use this encounter to give them some hands-on experience. Run them through a training scenario and have Liz give them pointers on how to fit in as "experienced" TRPs.

DEBUGGING

Working for DocWagon means that the player characters need to play the medical corp's game. If the player characters are an established group with a lot of gear and tons of magical toys, they will have to bite the bullet (so to speak) and sacrifice everything but what a DocWagon employee would carry. All TRPs have roughly the same equipment, so if a player character brings along his customized mortar attached to his dual Panther cannons to the DocWagon clinic, his cover is blown. Because the characters are TRPs, they can be a little rough around the edges; however, DocWagon takes its job seriously. If you ain't part of the team, you're out.

The gamemaster can generate statistics for Liz Yamato or play her in the abstract. She works in Internal Security, so she's not going to have the same experience as the runners do. She may have been part of an HTR team at one time but the SOTA has changed since then, so she can only give the player characters an it-was-this-way-back-then-I'm-not-sure-exactly-how-it's-done-now perspective. Depending on which mole he or she chooses, the gamemaster can plant clues and red herrings when Liz explains what is and is not proper procedure. Even Liz knows that many rules are broken in dangerous work like this, and that a

team that's been together as long as Team Three probably overlooks all kinds of "gray" areas such as Matrix access, clinic visits and gear swaps. These gray areas allow the gamemaster to plant a hint or even mislead the group as to the identity of the mole.

If for some reason the runners threaten Liz, or even go so far as to pull a gun on her, she will humor the troublesome player character until she defuses the threat. She will then try to put as much distance between herself and the player characters as she can. She'll also make a mental note not to trust Bob's judgment in the future and to look for freelancers on her own. The runners will be left in the warehouse with no gear, no nuyen and no prospects.

SPIES LIKE US

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

It's 2113 hours—about a quarter after nine in the evening—and Liz is driving you to the 83rd Street Clinic. After the past few days of training, you think you're finally starting to understand what Threat Response Personnel are supposed to do. Your thoughts wander until Liz stops the Citymaster and turns to you.

"Here's where you start to earn your pay. For the next two weeks, you'll be Expert Team Three's Threat Response Personnel. Remember, you need to provide hard proof that one of the four team members is the mole. Without anything to back up that suspicion, my hands are tied. I'll check in with you every afternoon to see what you've come up with. If I feel you have enough evidence, I'll tell you—you make the capture and I'll arrive with security to take the mole away. Maybe then we can figure out who's been buying up all this sensitive information."

She pauses and looks you in the eye. "The mole is no use to me dead. Scan me?"

Another brief pause goes by before she smiles and says, "Good luck to all of you. Thanks for helping us out. As long as you don't break your cover, you should be fine. Also, you'll have to stay in character even after we find out the identity of the mole. You're scheduled as TRPs for the full fourteen-day shift, so you've got to keep up the facade until you're officially transferred out. The SINs you're using will be credited for the full two weeks' pay, so you'll walk away with something even if you don't find the mole."

You get out of the Citymaster, slinging your duffel bag over your shoulder. Liz waves at you and then drives off into the darkness. Time to go to work.

When the runners begin looking for Expert Team Three, read the following:

After asking directions from the receptionist, you walk through the halls of the clinic. You pass three wards, color-coded for each DocWagon service, and approach a door marked "Authorized DocWagon Employees Only." You slot the credstick with your new SIN number in the maglock, which chirps approvingly. The door opens onto another long corridor, which spills out into a large garage. You count five standard ambulances and three Citymasters, as well as a partially disassembled rotorcraft marked with the DocWagon logos suspended in a mechanic's sling in the far left corner of the room. The far wall is almost all doors, each of them large enough for a truck to pass through. On the long walls to your left and right are doors with changeable signs that indicate which paramedic teams are in which rooms. A sign by the door on the far left reads, "Expert Team Three." As you make your way around fuel pumps and charging cables, a klaxon shrieks. A voice over a loudspeaker drones, "Blue Team Eight, Blue Team Eight. Report to ambulance 178-03. Crisis on 48th and Crawford. Blue Team Eight, Blue Team Eight. Report to ambulance 178-03. Crisis on 48th and Crawford."

Before the second announcement is finished, six men and women in dark blue jumpsuits and DocWagon jackets burst through a door on the right side of the garage and head directly for the nearest ambulance. The garage door opens slowly. Within ten seconds, the ambulance is fully loaded and speeding through the gap, siren screaming and lights flashing. Seconds later, the door reverses direction and shuts, cutting off the faint wail of the siren. The sudden quiet feels ominous.

You continue toward Team Three's door and push the doorbell built into the maglock. You hear the chime through the door, followed by a faint, "Come in! It's unlocked!"

You open the door and step into what looks at first glance like a hotel room without beds. A large trideo unit stands against the left wall, and you can see a kitchenette to the right. A hallway directly across from the front door branches for about three meters to the left and the right. Three people are sitting on the couch and chairs arrayed around the trid: a pretty woman with short red hair who smiles at you; a stocky, balding man who nods as he stands up; and a young man clad in a silk kimono who doesn't glance away from the trid.

"You must be the new TRPs for this shift," the balding man says. "I'm Seth Palatine. It's a pleasure to meet you." He points to the redhead, "This is Vivianne Geldhausmann."

"Nice to meet you!" she says, beaming, "but please, call me Viv."

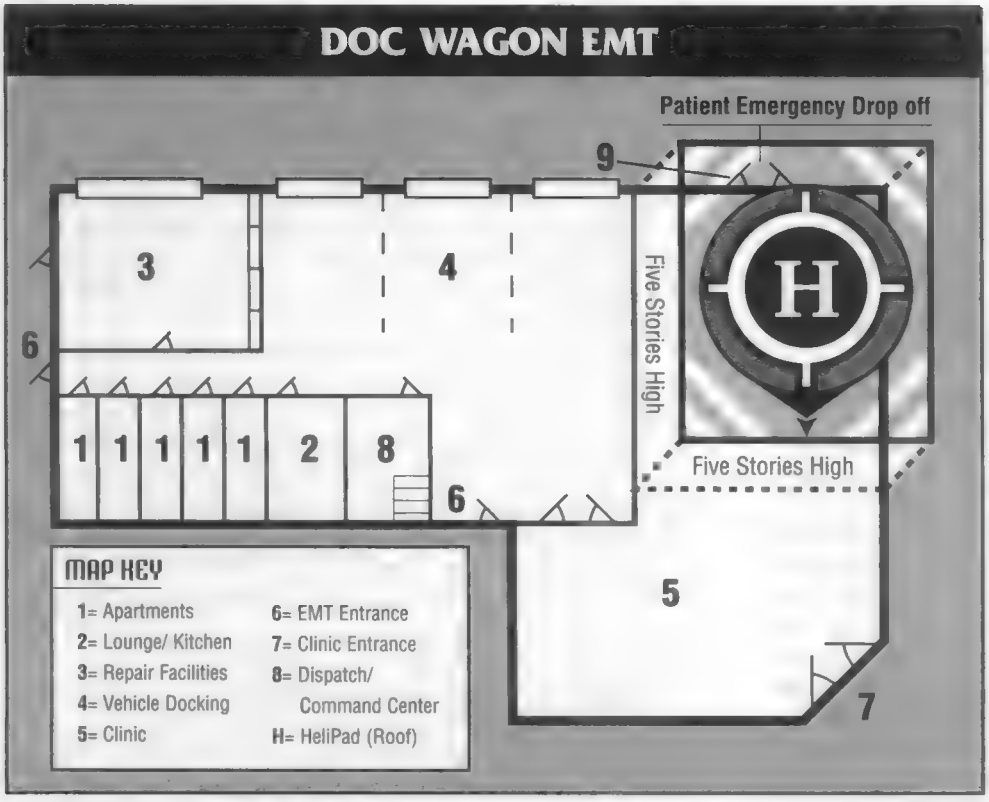
Seth turns to the man in the kimono. "And this is Gordon Kurtz." Gordon still doesn't look away from the trid. Seth frowns and turns back to you. "There's also Shawn Ferrer—I think he might be sleeping."

"Hey, Shawn!" Gordon shouts, glancing at you for the first time with a sneer. "The terps are here!" He returns his attention to the trid. You hear a door open and shut. Then a short man with a ponytail walks around the corner and into the room. He leans against the wall with his hands in his pockets. Three jackports in his forehead gleam metallic black. He waves abruptly, not really looking at you, and stuffs his hand back in his pocket.

Gordon shuts off the trid and stands up. "If we're done with the getting-to-know-you buildrek, I have somewhere important to be."

HOOKS

This scene should feel a little awkward and disorienting for the player characters. The runners are working for a megacorp and abiding by the corp's rules, which player characters who aren't used to following orders may find limiting. Making things worse,



match DocWagon's broadcasting frequency.

After that, the EMTs can hang out together, look over their gear, play cards, watch the trid, have a meal or do anything else they want. The gamemaster is free to create more EMTs or other DocWagon employees with whom the player characters may interact; statistics and personalities for any such characters are up to the gamemaster.

Each DocWagon vehicle carries 10 flash grenades and 10 smoke grenades, the exact location of which is up to the gamemaster. They are most likely to be in a storage compartment in the vehicle's rear section. Fifty extra Narcoject rounds each for rifles and pistols are stored with the grenades.

DOCWAGON CAMPAIGN SUGGESTIONS

If the player characters are already DocWagon employees, they should feel a bit more comfortable in their surroundings, but will still be treated with a certain contempt by most of Expert Team Three.

some of the NPCs on Expert Team Three treat the runners as inferiors merely because they are Threat Response Personnel; this condescension should make the runners bristle. Emphasize that the runners are in a different "caste" than the paramedics, but that their job is to protect the docs no matter what.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Not much goes on behind the scenes in this encounter. The gamemaster should have the characters get to know their surroundings; use the map above as a quick reference guide to the DocWagon EMT area.

The player characters should check in first and then each claim a bunk. Checking in involves meeting the Clinic Dispatch Team, for which the gamemaster can create as many non-player characters as he needs to flesh it out. The team inspects each character's weapons and gives them 10 gel rounds and clips or 10 stun rounds and clips plus 1 round of real ammo. The player characters must sign for the real ammo, and return it to the inspection team after each trip out unless they use it on the call. If a player character uses any bullets, that character is briefly separated from the team after arrival back at the clinic and must give a complete accounting of the mission. If anyone was injured on the call, the full team will need to make statements to Internal Security. Liz will be one of the interrogators.

From the dispatch team, the player characters can request extra standard-issue DocWagon equipment—medkits, trauma patches, gel rounds or stun rounds, a second weapon, more Narcoject rounds, grenades, armor and so on. The dispatch team will also calibrate any of the player characters' headware or external radios to

DEBUGGING

Not much can go wrong in this encounter. As long as the player characters don't provoke a fight, start pointing fingers and accusing people of being a mole, or brag about all the DocWagon personnel they've offed, Expert Team Three and the rest of the EMTs will accept them at face value.

CRASH COURSE

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

"Expert Team Three! Expert Team Three! Report to ambulance 844-01! Crisis on Thomas and Fairview! Expert Team Three! Report to ambulance 844-01 immediately!"

The blaring klaxon and the voice on the loudspeaker startle you. The paramedics drop what they're doing, grab their DocWagon jackets and hats, and charge through the door and into the garage beyond. You manage to grab most of your gear and head for the Citymaster at top speed. "Hurry the frag up!" Gordon shouts; he and Viv help you climb into the back of the Citymaster. Once you're all loaded in, the door slams shut and the interior lights blink on. You hear a siren as the Citymaster lurches forward, nearly spilling you on your hoop. Gordon is speaking into an intercom that you assume connects to the cab, while Viv buckles herself into a fold-out bench-seat. You continue stashing your gear away and fastening your armor, finishing up as Gordon shuts off the intercom and buckles himself in.

"Here's the situation, terps," he tells you. "Our client is a Miss Onizuka, 23, 5'4", 110 pounds, black hair and black eyes cosmetically altered to purple. No allergies. Registered cyberware: datajack and headware memory. Voiceprint didn't match her voice with the caller's, but the caller reported that she'd suffered severe head trauma. I heard gunfire in the background. Am I forgetting anything?" He frowns and looks at Viv, who shakes her head. "Good," he says with a grim smile. Then he leans against the side of the Citymaster and closes his eyes.

When the runners arrive at the call site, read the following:

"Gunfire's heavy. Powering cannon," a voice squawks over the intercom. It sounds like Shawn's monotone. "Deviants engaged with Lone Star Security Services."

Grimacing, Viv leans over and talks into the intercom. "Shawn, where's our client?"

There is a brief pause, then the intercom squawks again. "With the deviants."

Gordon groans. "What a fragging great day this is gonna be." Viv frowns at him, but he ignores her.

The Citymaster lurches to a stop. Shawn's voice fills the rear cabin. "Destination reached. Rear hatch unlocked. Watch yourselves."

You can hear small- and medium-caliber weaponry being fired and smell the acrid stench of cordite as soon as you pop the rear doors. As you prepare to escort the paramedics to their client, you hear a hoarse, "Over here! Over here!" followed by a burst of gunfire.

The shout came from the right side of this T-intersection, where a chewed-up Leyland-Rover serves as a temporary barricade. On the other side of the street are two Chrysler-Nissan Patrol-Ones parked sideways as cover for the cops crouching behind them. "C'mon terp, get a move on!" Gordon growls, motioning you toward the Leyland-Rover. "The longer we wait, the sooner she'll die!"

HOOKS

Kick off this encounter at breakneck speed. Startle the players into action until they arrive on the scene of their first response. Once there, the player characters should feel as if they are betraying their own kind. Show them how ruthless shadowrunners can be from the perspective of the corps. When the cops get into the action, heighten the inter-corporate politics between Lone Star and DocWagon. Give the player characters a peek at how extra-territoriality plays out in the mean streets.

BEHIND THE SCENES

This encounter is the runners' first glimpse at how High Threat Response teams work. Sometime in the evening on the second day, they are called out to Thomas and Fairview, a T-intersection half a mile east of Seattle's Downtown district.

Earlier in the evening, a shadowrunning team broke into a Lone Star facility and tried to remove an incriminating item from the evidence locker. While they were there, the team decker wandered across some sensitive files in the system, but was attacked by black IC before she could copy all of them. She nearly died before one of her teammates jacked her out. In addition to the wounds she received from the IC, she also suffering from severe dump shock.

The shadowrunners escaped the facility, but two Patrol-Ones in the area were sent to stop them from getting too far. The information grabbed by the decker proved that the director of the Lone Star facility was embezzling from the company; to keep the scandal from getting out, the four officers who show up have been ordered to shoot the runners "while resisting arrest," regardless of whether they actually resist arrest or not. These four officers are the only ones that the embezzler has allowed to respond to the call, and they cannot call for backup.

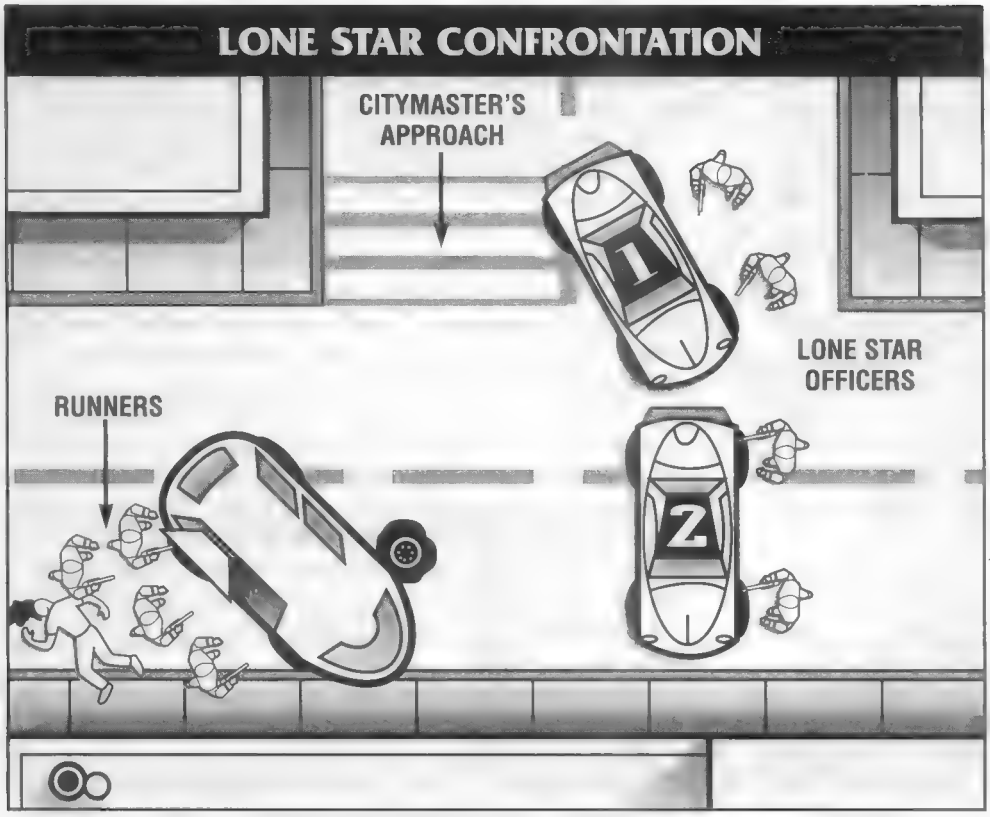
When the Patrol-Ones caught up with the runners' van, the Star engaged it in a running gun battle that ended at the intersection of Thomas and Fairview. After the cops shot the van's tire out, the shadowrunning team elected to ditch the vehicle and duke it out rather than go peacefully. When the player characters arrive, the Patrol-Ones have been set up as a barricade across the street from the damaged Leyland-Rover. For the exact positions of the Lone Star officers and the shadowrunning team, see the Lone Star Confrontation Map.

The shadowrunning team consists of one mercenary, a rigger, two street samurais and the decker. For the merc's statistics, use the Mercenary archetype (p. 58, **SRII**), but replace the LMG with a Colt Cobra [SMG, 32 (clip), SA/BF/FA, 6M, with one extra clip]. For the rigger, use the Rigger archetype (p. 59, **SRII**) but without any drones. For the two street samurai, use the Street Samurai archetype (p. 62 of **SRII**); for the decker, use the Decker archetype on p. 79, **Virtual Realities 2.0.** The decker has a Deadly Stun wound and a Serious Physical wound; each of the other shadowrunners has a Light wound. For the Lone Star officers, use the Foot Patrol Officer statistics in **Under the Influence** (p. 20) or the Street Cop from page 211 of **SRII.** In either case, the officers are wearing a Partial Suit of heavy armor (6/4) and are armed with an HK227-S [SMG, 28 (clip), SA/BF, 7M, with 2 extra clips] and a Ruger Thunderbolt [Heavy Pistol, 12 (clip), BF, 12S (already adjusted for burst-fire rules), with 3 extra clips]. So far the officers have been lucky; only two of them have sustained Light wounds. For the purposes of the encounter, the officers have Threat/Professional Ratings of 3/3.

Viv and Gordon will grab a stretcher and some medical equipment and then approach the runners while the player characters cover them. Seth will enter the rear of the Citymaster to prep the equipment as Shawn tracks the vehicle's turret between the runner team and the officers. The officers cease fire as soon as they see DocWagon personnel approaching the shadowrunners.

When the player characters reach the shadowrunners, the paramedics will examine the client and quickly question her fellow runners about what happened to her. They will then place her on the stretcher and start back toward the Citymaster.

Depending on the gamemaster's choice, the rest of this encounter can go one of two ways. The gamemaster can also use both options if he or she feels that there is enough time to complete them.



The three remaining officers are covering the shadowrunning team's position, but are giving most of their attention to the interaction between the player characters and the fourth officer. If the player characters attack the officer, one of the other officers will shoot in the DocWagon personnel's general direction until the officer talking to the player characters reaches cover. Meanwhile, the other two officers will try to destroy the Citymaster's turret-mounted LMG before turning their attention to the paramedics and TRPs.

The shadowrunning team can provide the player characters with convenient allies if they get into a bind with the Lone Star cops. They will join in if the player characters look like they are losing, and will fight until a shadowrunner receives a Serious wound or greater, or until the officers leave. The shadowrunning team may even become contacts for the player characters if the player characters play their cards right.

OPTION ONE: I FOUGHT THE LAW

As the player characters and the paramedics return to the Citymaster, one of the officers emerges from behind the Patrol-Ones and approaches them. He claims that the decker escaped from custody, so it is within the officers' jurisdiction to take her back to the nearest Lone Star Security Services facility and incarcerate her. If the player characters ignore this lie, the officer will start making veiled threats like, "the Corporate Court might want to hear about this," and "if we file a lawsuit, we'll hold you personally responsible for your actions." If this fails, the officer will try more blatant intimidation, saying that "somebody's about to open up a big ole' can of whup-ass," and ordering them to "stop right now, if you know what's good for you!"

If he continues to get no response, the officer will begin to hurl racial epithets at any metahuman present, or resort to incredibly graphic insults in an attempt to rouse the player characters' anger. He wants to force them to make the first violent move, which will invalidate DocWagon's jurisdiction and allow the officers to legally retaliate. He will not threaten them directly or point his gun anywhere near them, but will return fire if attacked or if the player characters threaten him in any manner other than verbally. This situation is a good time to have the player characters use their temporary DocWagon Etiquette Skill. With 1 success against a Target Number 3, a player character remembers that Lone Star will not fire on DocWagon personnel unless fired upon first. They will also remember that DocWagon maintains procedures with Lone Star that allow the security service to retrieve "criminal" clients in an official manner—and what this officer is proposing does not fit those procedures.

OPTION TWO: CROSS-EYED & PAINLESS

The shadowrunning team will follow the player characters and the paramedics back to the Citymaster, essentially using them as mobile cover to avoid attack by the Lone Star officers. When they arrive at the Citymaster, they will ask to ride along with their companion to the clinic. Astute player characters will most likely reject this request outright. The shadowrunners don't actually count on being allowed to join their fallen decker, but unless the player characters tell them to frag off, a couple of them will enter the rear of the Citymaster to get into a better tactical position. Next, from wherever they happen to be, the runners will attempt to car-jack the Citymaster. They'll use one of the paramedics or even the decker as a hostage, trying to bluff the player characters into dropping their weapons and letting the runners escape. They want to get the decker to a street doc because they assume DocWagon will turn her over to Lone Star after she recovers. To forestall this, they plan to steal the Citymaster and then get the decker to safety. They won't actually shoot any hostages they take, but will fire at the player characters if they feel threatened.

Likewise, the Lone Star officers can provide the player characters with convenient allies if the shadowrunners look like they might get away. The cops will fight until one of them receives a Serious wound or greater. If the player characters drive the shadowrunning team away from the Citymaster, the officers will attempt to finish the shadowrunners off, but will not break extraterritoriality by harming the decker.

DOCWAGON CAMPAIGN SUGGESTIONS

DocWagon player characters will have an advantage in this encounter, as their training will have instilled in them the appropriate actions for a TRP in such situations. They will understand how far they can go without crossing the line, and what the Lone Star officers can do before the player characters have the legal right to forcibly defend DocWagon property. On the flip side, player characters who attack the officers in defiance of their training can put themselves at a serious disadvantage within the framework of a DocWagon campaign. They will be penalized, and most likely the rest of the TRP team will also suffer. Remind the player characters of the possible consequences if they get too gun-happy, but let them make the final decision.

DEBUGGING

If the runners shoot at or otherwise attack any of the Lone Star officers, they have overstepped their corporate jurisdiction, and the cops may then attack them with impunity. The officers will focus the brunt of their attacks on the Citymaster and any player characters attempting to help the shadowrunning team, including the client that the player characters are supposed to protect. The officers will retreat if they believe the decker has been killed, or if three of them take a Serious wound or greater. The player characters will get reamed for stupidity by the surviving paramedics, and can look forward to being chewed out by a higher-up back at the clinic for risking a lawsuit. The player characters' cover might even be blown.

If the player characters attack the shadowrunning team without provocation, they will receive much the same treatment. Even if they expect the runners to try something sneaky, they are not legally allowed to act until the opposition poses a significant threat to DocWagon personnel, equipment or clients. Breaking these rules buys the player characters almost the same amount of outrage as if they had fired on the Lone Star officers, though they will ultimately land in far less trouble because the shadowrunning team is hardly likely to sue DocWagon. However, the potential for blowing their cover still exists. The gamemaster decides whether or not the player characters' actions were blatant enough for the paramedics to question their legitimacy as TRPs. If the shadowrunners managed to steal the Citymaster or the client dies because of the player characters' negligence, the player characters will be in hot water for not defending the medics adequately, and (once again) might blow their cover.

CHICKEN SOUP

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

"Hey terps," Gordon says over the intercom. "Delicate situation coming up. I'll patch this client through to the back so you can hear for yourselves what's going on." The intercom crackles, and then a woman's voice says, "Hello? Um ... my name is Gloria Tanaka. I'm a personal assistant for Peter Barnsworth. He has a DocWagon bracelet, so I guess I'm calling for him, too. I can't see him from where I am, but ... ."

After a slight pause, she continues, her words gathering speed as she goes. "We work for Parashield, Incorporated—the company trains and sells security paranimals to private corporations. Mr. Barnsworth sold some trained cockatrii to a Renraku subsidiary, and they were transferred here for shipment, but somehow there was a mix-up and the warehouse manager never received the authorized forms. We got here about half an hour ago to get everything squared away, and had to do all the forms all over again.

"So we started signing and filling out everything, but then a few minutes ago I realized I'd forgotten to call home and let my husband know that he should eat without me. So I was on my way out to the car to get my phone when there was this horrible noise, and then a whole lot of squawking. The cockatrii got out of their cages somehow—I don't know how exactly. Then I heard screaming and lots more squawking. Of course, I knew that the last thing you want to do around our animals is run away—they're trained to chase and attack if you do—so I climbed up on one of the crates real fast. I think I twisted my ankle. We need help, fast."

Give the player characters a chance to ask questions and then read the following:

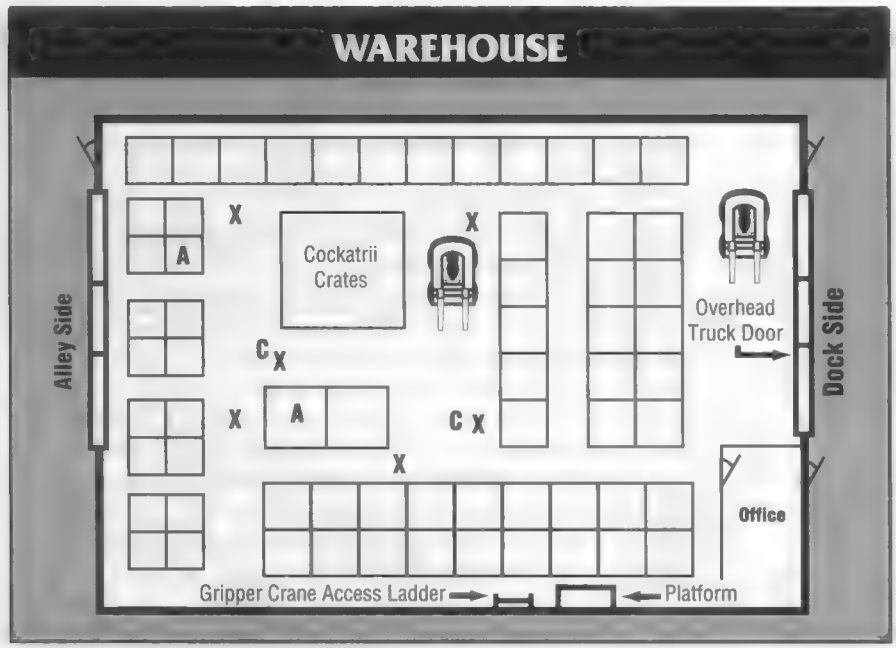
"Listen, there're fifty of these things loose in here, plus me and Mr. Barnsworth and some workers and the foreman. Most of the few people I can see are lying still on the floor—it looks like the cockatrii paralyzed them when they escaped. Besides me, there's only one other person up on the crates, and he's too far away for me to talk to. I have to be quiet or else I might startle them, and a stampede is the last thing we need right now.

"You'd better get here quick. When we get ready to ship these birds, they're injected with a mild sedative to keep them calm. Makes them as tame as chickens. Except I think it's starting to wear off. If they shake off the drug and see all these people lying around, I'm afraid they're going to start eating them. Oh, and don't hurt them when you get here; Parashield puts at least two hundred thousand nuyen into training each one of these things. They'll probably hold you responsible for compensation if the cockatrii are hurt or killed, but I'd have to check with our legal department to know for sure ... ."

You're drawing near the dock now, and you can hear gunshots coming from the far end. The shots don't seem to be moving your way, but you're a little worried about them nonetheless. A warehouse full of cockatrii and some unknown folks with guns ... just another DocWagon HTR run. Good thing you can count on the Citymaster's big guns.

HOOKS

This encounter should come across as utterly absurd at first. The runners are wading through a sea of groggy paranormal chickens to save people. As the cockatrii slowly begin to shake off the effects of the sedative, the player characters find themselves working against time to save the clients before the paranormal chickens turn into aggressive, territorial Chickens of Doom. If the player characters cannot rescue everyone trapped in the warehouse before the cockatrii fully revive, show the tragedy of the situation as the cockatrii descend upon the remaining helpless victims.



Gordon will disagree, but Seth insists on his plan. He will also call for a Crisis Response Team to help prepare for the relatively large number of people he expects will need treatment. For the warehouse layout, entry points and position of bodies, see the Warehouse Map. An "A" indicates Gloria Tanaka and the worker who made it to the tops of the crates. A "C" indicates Peter Barnsworth and the warehouse manager, both DocWagon clients. An "X" indicates the position of the other paralyzed workers.

The drugged cockatrii are not asleep; the sedative they received makes them docile rather than knocking them out. They are aware of their surroundings, though groggy and a bit confused. They can use all their standard powers, but the drug in their systems adds a +2 modifier to the target number of any attack they make. In addition, their Quickness and Reaction are halved (round fractions down). The damage code for a successful attack remains 8M (see pp. 222 and 233, **SRII**).

BEHIND THE SCENES

After the previous encounter, give the player characters adequate time to interact with the paramedics and do some legwork regarding the mole. **Chicken Soup** should run at least one day after the first encounter, sometime in the late evening. Expert Team Three gets this call from somewhere in the docks in downtown Seattle—assume that the dispatchers gave the team the exact address when the call came in. Viv and Seth will ride in the rear compartment this time, with Shawn driving and Gordon riding shotgun. As the team approaches the site, read **Tell It To Them Straight.**

Earlier in the day, yakuza operatives had planned to hit a warehouse in which they believed the local Mafia were receiving a shipment of military-grade weaponry. They needed a distraction to decoy the Knight-Errant security force that guards the warehouse complex; after poring over several manifests they'd obtained for warehouses near the one they meant to hit, they decided to use Parashield's cockatrii shipment. One of the yakuza operatives, disguised as a worker, altered the programming of the cages' master environment computer; he told it to open all of the cage doors at the same time that the yakuza planned to strike. Unfortunately the plan backfired; nobody in the warehouse was able to call security, and so the yaks had to shoot their way in. During this encounter, yakuza operatives and Knight-Errant security guards are engaged in a running gun battle throughout the dock complex.

If the gamemaster wants to extend this encounter, the yakuza/Knight-Errant battle could spill onto the scene after (or during!) the rescue attempt. Use any appropriate archetype statistics for the yakuza or Knight Errant guards.

When the player characters arrive at the warehouse, Seth tells them that it's too dangerous for the paramedics to go inside; instead, the TRPs must enter the warehouse and bring the clients out to the paramedics, who will treat them in relative safety.

CRYING FOWL

The player characters' real enemy in this encounter is noise. The drugged cockatrii are slowly shrugging off the effects of the sedative, but loud noises or pain of any kind will shock them out of their groggy state very quickly. Anytime a character makes any noise louder than casual conversation, the sound will startle the cockatrii in his or her immediate vicinity. They will flap their wings and attempt to get away from the disturbance. This vigorous physical activity will clear their tiny, fogged brains and awaken their senses much faster, so it is in the player characters' best interest to be relatively quiet during this encounter. A single gunshot will cause the nearest 3D6 cockatrii to panic and scatter in various directions, and those animals will immediately become fully alert and will no longer affected by the sedative. For every gunshot fired, another 3D6 cockatrii regain full use of their faculties.

SO WE'RE ON THE ROOF ...

The player characters' best bet for a successful rescue is to use the large "gripper crane" that runs along the roof of the warehouse. An access ladder near the southeast corner of the warehouse leads to a small 8-foot x 6-foot platform that houses the crane's controls (see map). To figure out how the controls work requires a successful Perception (5) Test. Normally used to stack crates, the crane runs on an elaborate track system along the ceiling that allows it to move freely anywhere inside the warehouse. One player character can secure himself to the crane while another character moves the crane into the necessary positions to pick up the clients.

I'VE FALLEN AND I CAN'T GET UP!

Of the eight paralyzed people lying on the warehouse floor among the mass of sleepy cockatrii, only Peter Barnsworth and the warehouse manager are DocWagon clients. The other six are warehouse workers. All eight were unlucky enough to be brushed

by a cockatrice tail in the paranimals' initial escape. Gloria Tanaka and another worker are conscious and atop crates, high enough off the floor to be relatively safe from attack. Unless the player characters work quickly, the cockatrii become edgy after three people have been rescued. After the fifth rescue, the cockatrii have become fully conscious and aware. They will tear the remaining people on the floor to ribbons unless the player characters do some very quick thinking, and the player characters will also be in great personal danger. At this point Gordon will enter the warehouse, climb up on a stack of crates, and leap from crate to crate until he can reach one of the wounded non-clients. He'll make a daring rescue (taking a Serious Stun wound in the process), but he will nevertheless manage to make it outside with the victim slung over his shoulder. After the player characters and the medics have rescued as many people as possible from the warehouse, the CRT ambulance (which has arrived by this time) will head to Seattle General with the non-clients. The Citymaster will return to the nearest DocWagon clinic to drop off the clients. Then it will head back to the 83rd Street Clinic.

DOCWAGON CAMPAIGN SUGGESTIONS

DocWagon player characters who kill any of the cockatrii will be held responsible for their actions. Parashield Incorporated will sue DocWagon for their loss, and the guilty player character(s) will be placed on probation or otherwise disciplined until the court case is resolved. This could seriously affect the player character's hopes for promotion.

DEBUGGING

If the runners decide to ignore Gloria's warning and kill the cockatrii, they will buy themselves a lot of trouble. Even if they are lucky enough to survive a cockatrii stampede, the people on the floor are in much greater danger of being attacked and slain. DocWagon will be sued for damages, and the player characters will receive a brutal official chewing-out after they return.

After this encounter, go to **Sleepless in Seattle.**

SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

You've been going non-stop for days, and you're wiped. Dr. Bob and Liz never told you how hard you'd have to work on this mission. You can't even remember the last time you slept for more than a couple of hours. As you take off your armor for what feels like the hundredth time, you notice how sweaty you are. Whoever manufactures the inner padding of the armor needs to find a better anti-absorbent agent, because you smell like a wet sasquatch. You ease onto your bunk, examine your cuts and bruises for a minute or two, and then close your eyes. Almost immediately, the chirping of the telecom startles you awake. After checking to make sure that none of the paramedics are around, you slot your credstick and enter the password. Liz's face appears on the screen; she looks flustered.

"I'm glad I caught you. The situation's changed. Someone's tampered with the security logs for the system. I checked to see if anybody tried to access the DNA records, and the system reported that an unknown user accessed the files about three hours ago. I think the mole will make the drop soon. Be on the lookout for—"

Suddenly the emergency klaxon blares through the room. "Expert Team Three! Expert Team Three! Report for duty!"

Liz frowns as the klaxon shrieks. "Dammit. Just keep your eyes open, all right? Good luck!" As her face fades from the screen, you scramble to grab your gear and then rush out the door.

As the player characters are returning to the 83rd Street Clinic, read the following:

You hear a faint popping sound. Then Shawn's voice blares over the intercom, "Brace for impact!" The Citymaster shudders and veers to the right. You can hear the muffled-but-audible grating of metal along concrete. A massive jolt to the vehicle's right side suddenly knocks everything sideways. Loose equipment goes flying. Eventually the Citymaster slides to a stop.

Let the player characters get their bearings, then continue with the following:

"Shawn! What's happening?" Viv shouts into the intercom.

"Right front tire blew. Swerved into a street light." After a short pause, he continues. "Radio's down. The impact must've jarred the transmitter."

"Is there any threat to us?"

Another pause. "Negative. Stretch your legs while I call dispatch."

Viv frowns. "I thought the radio was out!"

"There's a telecom booth ten meters from here. Be right back."

HOOKS

This encounter should convey the real life of a DocWagon EMT. No sleep. Street violence never stops, and DocWagon paramedics are the only ones even trying to stanch the bleeding. The player characters should feel punchy and on edge, with just a little glow of satisfaction at finally being accepted by Team Three. However, one of the team is a traitor and the player characters are the only ones who know that something dark is going on. This encounter is the player characters' best chance to find out the identity of the mole, so encourage their paranoia. Don't give them time to breathe, or the players time to think, until they arrive at the site of this latest emergency.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Almost immediately after they return from the previous encounter, Expert Team Three gets another call. The specifics of this emergency are left up to the gamemaster so that he can incorporate an encounter of his own into **Malpractice.** The gamemaster can elaborate on the following suggestions, or design any other encounter he desires. Any of these suggestions can also serve as training scenarios if the gamemaster chooses to put the player characters through their paces during their 48-hour crash course in becoming a DocWagon TRP (see **Train in Vain,** p. 33).

• A Mr. Johnson who stiffed his shadowrunners is running for his life. The shadowrunners tracked him down and shot him in the arm, thereby automatically activating his Platinum DocWagon bracelet. He gave them the slip temporarily, but they are still hunting him—and they're getting close.

• A plane or helicopter just crashed in Elliot Bay. The player characters fly to the crash site in an Osprey II, where they must try to airlift the survivors out of the water under harsh weather conditions.

• A yakuza/Mafia firefight breaks out on the streets and a few DocWagon clients get caught in the crossfire. The player characters must wade into the fighting to extract them. (In a less lethal variation, a street battle may break out between two or more rival gangs.)

• Expert Team Three must assist a Crisis Response Team in cleaning up a tanker truck that exploded. This includes pulling the living (and the dead) from the rubble.

• A hostage situation is going down inside a high-rise apartment building. The hostage is a DocWagon Platinum client whose bracelet signaled a fluctuation in life-signs from a heart attack. The player characters must somehow get the client away from the person who is holding her hostage.

• A fire in an older apartment building spreads out of control and the player characters must pull people from the blaze.

• A board member of Brackhaven Investments, who happens to be a Platinum client, is injured in a terrorist attack. The player characters must save him/her, even though they might not want this particular client to survive.

• A go-gang tries to car-jack the Citymaster en route to a response site.

• An afternoon traffic jam on I-405 causes a "traffic altercation" involving irate motorists and their handguns. The stressful experience of people trying to shoot each other just outside her car causes a pregnant woman with DocWagon Basic Service to go into premature labor. The player characters must airlift her out of traffic without becoming targets.

• The player characters must pull a Standard Response Team out of a firefight with shadowrunners or some other well-armed group.

• Any combination of the above. (Keep in mind, however, that a terrorist attack on a Brackhaven Investments yacht in which a heavily pregnant woman is taken a hostage while yakuza and Mafia operatives duke it out nearby on waterbikes might be a little too much for the players and the gamemaster to handle.)

As the player characters head back toward the 83rd Street Clinic, the Citymaster's tire blows and forces them off the road. By this time, the mole's "window" for transferring the stolen DNA and medical information has nearly expired, so the mole rigged the tire to blow on the return to the clinic. The mole needs an anonymous telecom to transfer the data to Brown, and so blew the tire the minute he/she spotted one on the street. After the Citymaster hits the light pole and comes to a stop, the mole claims that the radio is down as an excuse to use the telecom (allegedly to call dispatch and a tow truck).

This encounter is the player characters' chance to catch the mole in the act. A successful Perception (8) Test will reveal that the tire was exposed to intense heat at the spot where it looks the most ragged; a successful Demolitions (5) Test reveals that the heat came from a tiny amount of explosive. Additionally, a successful Electronics (7) Test will reveal that the radio was intentionally sabotaged (assuming a player character thinks to check it out). A player character who uses the public telecom can make a Computer (8) Test or an Electronics (10) Test to check the com's user logs; success shows that the most recent user transferred some files to an LTG number. Whether at the scene or after returning to the 83rd Street Clinic, the player characters will have enough evidence of the mole's identity to give to Liz. She will show up with ISD muscle, who will take the mole away for questioning. Let your players roleplay the unmasking-of-the-villain scene to the hilt if they so desire, before moving on to the next encounter.

Alternatively, the mole can try to escape in a DocWagon vehicle (Citymaster or Osprey II). If this happens, the player characters must chase the mole through Seattle and attempt to bring him in for interrogation. Think of the ultimate high-speed chase scene, and let your players go for it.

The mole's capture will (of course) have potentially unpleasant consequences. As a safeguard, Brown told the mole to use a "dead mail" drop to let him know if something went wrong. An e-mail consisting of the word "Cleopatra" is queued in the mole's account, set to go to Brown at midnight unless the mole delays delivery for the next 24 hours. After the mole's capture, the e-mail goes to Brown and warns him that the mole's cover has been blown. Brown will panic and take immediate steps to remedy the situation. Go to **Déjà Vu,** p. 43.

DOCWAGON CAMPAIGN SUGGESTIONS

Any one of the optional encounters listed above that the gamemaster doesn't use in this adventure can be recycled for future DocWagon adventures. Good adventure ideas can also be taken from any of the many "medical" television shows.

DEBUGGING

If the player characters don't exhibit the immense paranoia common to shadowrunners and simply lounge around in the back of the Citymaster instead, they are going to miss the incriminating transfer. If so, give them opportunities back at the clinic to get this vital evidence; for example, a call from Liz indicating that they need to know who the mole is as soon as possible might get the players back on track.

Accusing the wrong person also may pose a problem. Liz and the ISD goons will take the accused away, at which point the real mole will realize that somebody is on to his or her connection with Brown. The first chance he gets, when the player characters and the other paramedics aren't around, the mole will slip away and contact Brown. Brown will pick up and then kill the mole, hiding the body in Puget Sound. Continue with **Déjà Vu,** p. 43. Before his or her demise, the mole tells Brown that the player characters talked to ISD. Brown will assume that they know about him as well as about the operation.

If one of the player characters is wounded badly enough to be incapacitated in **Chicken Soup** (p. 39), the gamemaster may wish to skip the third emergency call and simply read the second

Tell It To Them Straight section above as they are returning from the warehouse call. This will allow the wounded character to participate in **Sleepless in Seattle** while also giving him or her time to recover for the next encounter, in which all the player characters must be relatively healthy to survive. If a player character has a Serious or greater Physical wound, he or she can heal up at the clinic. Mages and even a Snake shaman can be on hand if necessary to help with treatment.

If the TRP team is large enough to need two Citymasters (see **Introduction,** p. 30), have the tire pop at a time and place that will disable both vehicles—when the Citymasters are in an alley, or as one turns a sharp corner so that the second hits it from behind, or so that the first Citymaster blocks the road and the second can't maneuver out of the way. If the mole refuses to use the second Citymaster's radio or insists on making a call from the telecom for any reason, the player characters get an important clue that something's up.

DÉJÀ VU

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

The call came three minutes ago: an elf by the name of Salthili Truan was reported injured in the Spring Lakes neighborhood of Renton. The area screams "rich"; you guess it must be, if the parents of a 13-year-old elven kid can afford to buy him a Platinum contract. The details are vague—low blood pressure and an irregular heartbeat—but the location places the kid somewhere in the construction site of the new Spring Lakes Apartments. According to the dispatcher's preliminary assessment, the kid probably fell from something because the shift in his vitals was so abrupt—but she couldn't be sure.

Going out one person short makes you feel a little naked, a bit off your game. But you'll only have to deal with a small child, not a gang war—looks like for once you've gotten an easy call. You should be back at the clinic and on your bunk in no time.

When the player characters arrive at the construction site, read the following:

The twelve-foot-tall gates to the Spring Lakes Apartments construction site are wide open. Even in the dark you can make out the skeletal monoliths of the building frameworks, piercing the night sky like giant metal teeth. The first few floors have outer walls added, though there aren't any windows yet. Beyond the fence surrounding the complex is a wide drainage ditch, spanned by a dirt bridge just behind the gate that allows vehicles access to the site. Large stacks of I-beams and sections of pipe that look to be at least eight feet in diameter are scattered across the ground. At the base of the nearest building, barely registering on the Citymaster's sensor suite, is a small crumpled form.

If the player characters fail to voice any suspicions about this call, read the following:

The Citymaster begins to cross the bridge, easily finding purchase on the mixture of gravel and dirt. The body is definitely the boy; you're close enough now for the Citymaster's sensors to pick up the beacon—

A bright light from the second floor of the building floods the Citymaster before the windows can polarize to cut the glare. An instant later you see a second flash, some distance to the right of the first. Time seems to slow down as the blinding light approaches you. It grows from a pinprick until it nearly fills the Citymaster with radiance. Then the ball of light explodes in front of the Citymaster, jostling you wildly within your restraints. A half-second later, the second ball of light hits the ground just to the right of the Citymaster, and the world tips drunkenly sideways.

HOOKS

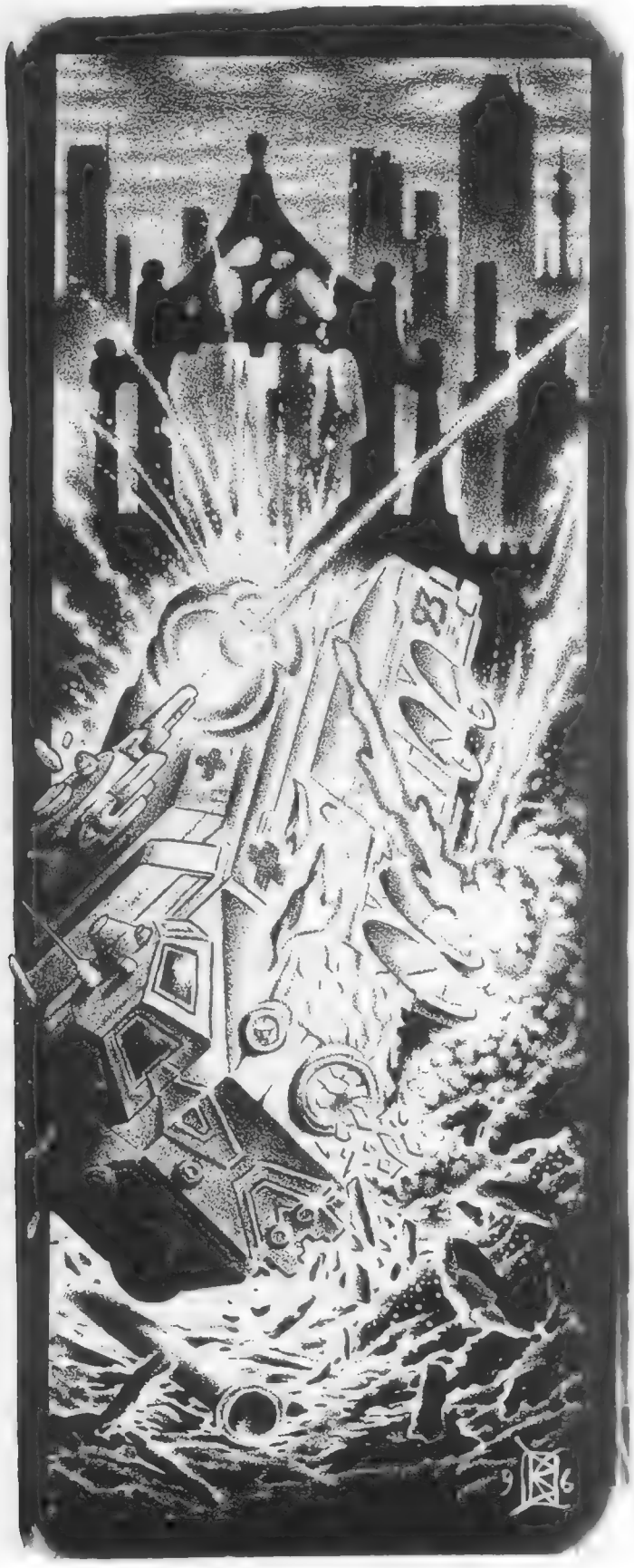
By now the player characters should have a standard operating procedure. This encounter should tear that procedure apart. For the better part of two weeks the player characters have done nothing but go out on calls, and should be a bit numb by now. Still, something about this call should arouse their suspicions. They may recall Dr. Bob's story of the ambush that nearly killed him, and suddenly realize just how much trouble they're in. Let them wonder what the balls of light are, but emphasize how fast things are happening around them. Make them realize that they are fighting for their own lives and those of the paramedics as well.

BEHIND THE SCENES

This encounter occurs once the player characters accuse someone of being the mole, whether or not they guess correctly. Brown, frantically trying to figure out how his sweet deal blew up in his face, decides that the leak must have come from someone on Expert Team Three. (If the characters accused the wrong person and the real mole contacted him, Brown is certain of it.) He believes that if he acts fast enough, he can still salvage the situation. Within a day, he hatches a plan to slaughter Expert Team Three, using the stolen client information to find appropriate bait. Brown kidnaps the elf boy on his way home from school and keeps him restrained and unconscious until the rest of the ambush is in place. He then drops the child, still bound and out cold, from the fourth floor of the unfinished apartments to the hard ground below. Brown returns to his position and waits for the player characters to arrive. He has hired a decker to tinker with the DocWagon system's Response Team Allocation algorithm to ensure that Expert Team Three will get any calls received from the Spring Lakes neighborhood.

When the player characters cross the bridge in the Citymaster, read the second section under **Tell It To Them Straight.** Brown has placed two operatives with LAWS on the second story of the building nearest the front gate. Brown guides the fired rockets with his tactical computer (p. 53, **Shadowtech**) so that they detonate directly in front of and just to the right of the Citymaster. By hitting the nearby ground instead of the vehicle itself, Brown hopes to make the driver lose control. Unless the driver makes a successful Car (16) Test, the impact flips the Citymaster and knocks it into the drainage ditch that surrounds the site.

As soon as the rockets have landed, the rest of the operatives show themselves. Two are hiding inside the large pipes,



and three others have taken up a position behind a stack of steel girders. The thickness of the metal prevents heat sight or infrared from picking them up, and so the sudden appearance of five men armed with FN-HARs or Ingram LMGs should surprise the player characters. Use the Former Military Officer (Low-Grade) (p. 6, **Contacts**) or the Mercenary archetype (p. 58, **SRII**) for the operatives' statistics, but give them camo jackets and explosive rounds for their weapons.

The operatives will try to pick off anybody emerging from the Citymaster and will also attempt to shoot the gas tank if the Citymaster has been knocked into the ditch. The goons with the LAWs will grab their firearms and join the action, taking 5 turns to get to ground level. After directing the rockets, Brown will quietly depart via the workman's entrance. He will get in his car and drive away to rendezvous with the surviving operatives.

The paramedics will do their best to avoid getting shot in this encounter, but nonetheless remember that they are here to save a client. Once the shooting dies down, they will try to reach the child and revive him. Unless they can reach him within 7 turns, he will die.

Unless they choose to blow their cover (and suffer all the associated consequences, as described in **Picking Up the Pieces,** p. 45), the characters have no choice but to fulfill their duties as DocWagon employees and then report the evening's events to Liz (as DocWagon employees, rather than shadowrunners, this is what they would do anyway). This leaves them with clues to investigate during their next down time. If the characters decide to throw it all away, they can follow up on the following information immediately. With a successful Interrogation (8) Test, player characters who think to capture one of the operatives can learn the meet's location, as well as the location of the two midnight-blue Superkombi vans in which Brown's men arrived. Enterprising player characters may want to follow Brown; any encounter with Brown is up to the gamemaster to devise.

DEBUGGING

If the runners never heard the story of Bob's ambush nearly three years ago, this encounter will come as a shock to them. Let them flounder as they try figure out what the frag is going on, and in the meantime shower the Citymaster with lead.

This encounter could easily end up with the player characters very, very dead. Though it is not intended to produce wholesale slaughter of the player characters, Brown's operatives are well-trained and well-paid; by the time the encounter ends, they should have gotten their pound of flesh. Don't be afraid to shell out heavy damage, but try to avoid decimating the player characters.

If this encounter as written doesn't seem like an appropriate test of your player characters' skills, give Brown's operatives APDS rounds in place of explosive rounds, or replace the LAWs with Ballista multi-role missile launchers (p. 42, **Fields of Fire**). When the rockets are fired, use Brown's Gunnery skill (with appropriate bonuses for the tactical computer) to determine the outcome.

PICKING UP THE PIECES

If the player characters expose the mole, they've succeeded in their task. Brown's mysterious organization no longer has a contact in DocWagon ... or does it? When the player characters meet with Bob at You Should Not Eat So Much! to collect their pay, he will ask them who they believe is behind Brown. After the player characters explain their theory, he will describe his theory (which consists of whatever the gamemaster wants the player characters to know). He may produce a hard copy of a **Threats** posting from the Shadowlands BBS, pointing out the entry or entries that support the gamemaster's chosen explanation for Brown's organization's goal. Bob wants to stop this threat to metahumanity, and he lets the player characters know in no uncertain terms that he intends to go after the bad guys with every resource at his disposal. He offers to share any more information that he receives about this situation with the player characters and asks them to do the same. If he or she so desires, the gamemaster can use Bob's ongoing crusade as a springboard for future adventures.

Player characters who leave the 83rd Street Clinic as soon as they discover the mole's identity, rather than serving out the remainder of their shift, will cause themselves a lot of trouble. By leaving before the end of the assignment they agree to perform, they will have broken their contract and Bob will not pay them more than 5,000 nuyen (assuming that the player characters managed to guess the mole's identity correctly). Additionally, the paramedics and an alternate group of TRPs will suffer the events of **Déjà Vu,** and will all be slaughtered by Brown and his men. The player characters will not receive a Karma Award for Threat (see below) because the Threat is in the final encounter. Instead, they must pay a Karma penalty because it is their fault that the other paramedics get killed by Brown. If the mole managed to escape and tell Brown what happened, Brown will realize that the TRPs accompanying the paramedics into the ambush weren't the player characters, and will pour serious resources into finding out the identity and location of the player characters. Assuming he finds them, he will try to set up another ambush in hopes of silencing the leak before it spreads.

If the player characters kill the mole upon discovering his/her identity instead of going to Liz with the information, they will get no Karma award for exposing the spy. In addition, they will have to deal with the consequences of killing someone while in the employ of DocWagon. Unless the gamemaster believes the group has pulled off a plausible "tragic accident" (which is a lot harder than it may sound), they will inevitably leave some clue that can be traced back to them. Sooner or later, the other shoe will drop and they'll find themselves facing a murder charge.

If the player characters never figure out who the mole is, they serve as TRPs for the remainder of their two-week shift (which ends a few days after **Sleepless In Seattle**), but they will not experience the final encounter. They will receive no money from Dr. Bob, but can keep the fake SIN, the equipment and the 3,400 nuyen credited to the fake SIN for two weeks' pay. Brown keeps his contact within DocWagon, and Bob and Liz still will have no idea of the mole's identity. However, because of the way TRPs are cycled between teams, the player characters can try again in six weeks without arousing the mole's suspicions. Encounters during this second shift can come from the suggestions offered in **Sleepless In Seattle** (p. 41), or the gamemaster can create them out of whole cloth.

At the end of **Malpractice,** several questions remain for the gamemaster to answer. How were Brown and his organization using the stolen DNA samples and medical records? Who is Brown, and what organization does he represent? Might he actually be doing good? Most likely, the player characters will finish the adventure without ever meeting Brown. If the player characters survive, then they have earned themselves an Enemy (see pp. 71–75, **SRComp**). **Malpractice** makes a good introduction to running an Enemy in a campaign: the player characters spend the final encounter fighting for their lives against a well-armed and unknown force—basically, the very essence of a good Enemy. This ambush might well spur them to discover who is behind Brown and why these mysterious people are taking such pains to remain secret.

DOCWAGON CAMPAIGN SUGGESTIONS

DocWagon player characters will have their work cut out for them. They will likely have future opportunities to work with the ISD, taking a break from game sessions full of emergency responses to spend a few adventures undercover. They might work outside DocWagon to find Brown or discover more about his organization, or ISD might transfer them to another city to uncover a similar mole in a different clinic. Regardless of the details, successfully unmasking a spy in DocWagon will look very good on the player characters' annual performance report.

AWARDING KARMA

Award team Karma for the adventure as listed below. Award individual Karma per standard rules (p. 199, **SRII**).

Survival	1 point
Threat	2 points
Mole is exposed*	1 point
Mole is captured	1 point
Injured non-clients saved as well as clients	1 point for every 5 saved
A paramedic dies because of the runners' negligence	–1 point each

*Ignore this award if the runners kill the mole upon discovering his (or her) identity.

LEGWORK

This section provides the information the runners are likely to get from their contacts and investigations. Each of the following success tables lists contacts who are likely to know certain information, the target number for obtaining that information and the number of successes necessary to learn increasingly valuable levels of information.

Robert Khamdeng has two success tables because the runners may investigate him as Morphine and/or Doctor Bob. Gordon Kurtz has two success tables because different information about him is available from different types of contacts.

MORPHINE

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 7)

Any Street contact.

Shadowland: Target Number 6/Search Time 18 hours

Successes	Results
0–1	"Naw, chum ... don't have any of that stuff this week. What you want is some Platinum Lace ... it'll take the edge right off."
2	"He works the shadows, but from what I hear he's got no permanent running team. He's a totally freelance shadowrunner. Does that strike you as odd?"
3	"Word is he's some kinda magician ... shaman, if what I hear has any truth to it. He tends to keep his head low, even in the shadows. You'd think he was hiding from somebody."
4	"Apparently, he used to work for a corp. Not sure which one, but it wasn't one of the Big Eight, I know that."
5+	"You didn't hear this from me—not any of it, *'masu ka*?—but his real name is Robert. Don't know his last name, but his first name is Robert."

DOCTOR BOB/ROBERT KHAMDENG

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 8)

Any Media, Corporate, Policlub or Paramedic contact.

Shadowland: Target Number 10/Search Time 24 hours

Successes	Results
0–1	"Wasn't he on 'Pass the Forceps' for three seasons?"
2	"Yeah, I think I heard the name before. He was on the trid awhile ago, but I don't know why."
3	"Wait—Doctor Bob? Doctor Bob Khamdeng? Yeah, he was that DocWagon employee that was all over the news about ten years back. I think he won some kind of humanitarian award."
4	"Actually, it seems HUMAN-itarian is more appropriate for good ol' Doctor Bob than the media realized. A few people saw him at Humanis Policlub meetings during their 2049 recruitment drive."
5+	"He showed up for a couple of Humanis meetings, but only a couple. Maybe he was just curious, or needed something to turn to. I don't think he voted for Brackhaven this past election—not really that type, y'know? Of course, I doubt he was the type to vote for Vogel, either."

SETH PALATINE

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 5)

Any Paramedic or Corporate contact.

Shadowland: Target Number 6/Search Time 18 hours

Successes	Results
0	"Wasn't he a villain in one of those old movies?"
1	"He's a pretty nice guy, but keeps to himself a lot."
2	"He spends a lot of time in his room, but he's not really antisocial. He reads the Koran a lot. I can't think of anyone more dedicated to his job than he is."
3	"I guess he has to be, considering what happened to him. I mean, being one of the first on the scene during the Night of Rage was no picnic. Having Metroplex Guardsmen prevent you from getting to the dying metahumans—I don't think that's something God can explain."
4+	"Of course, I don't think God can explain why the Sons of Sauron decided to bomb the apartment building Seth's mother lived in, either. I hear she was sick anyway, but all the excitement probably pushed her over the edge. At least Seth has the Koran to turn to."

VIVIANNE GELDHAUSMANN

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 6)

Any Paramedic or Corporate contact.

Shadowland: Target Number 8/Search Time 24 hours

Successes	Results
0	"Viv? You're talkin' about the heavy-set gal in the R&D division over at Renraku, right? Real nice girl."
1	"Viv is the nicest person I've ever met. She's always looking on the bright side of things, even when they get really bad—and when you're working as paramedic, things can get pretty bad."
2	"Good thing, too. Her husband, Jacob, got killed four or five years ago during that big gang war with the Ancients."
3	"He got information for Lone Star. 'Cybersnoop,' that's what the media calls what he was doing. Poor Viv ... that's the only time I've seen her sad."
4+	"You have to wonder what something like that does to a person. I mean, she's a psychiatrist, right? Who is she supposed to go to when she has a problem? I always wonder what goes on in her head when she thinks of Jacob."

GORDON KURTZ

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 5)

Any Paramedic or Corporate contact.

Shadowland: Target Number 7/Search Time 18 hours

Successes	Results
0	"Look, if this gets out both of us are as good as soy, but I hear Kurtz is an army colonel who went rogue somewhere in the northwest."
1	"Gordo? He's a loudmouthed, wisecracking son of a slitch. Ain't he great?"
2	"Lately I've been a little worried about him. Seems he's been snapping at people for no reason, going off on them without warning. He's not even funny about it anymore; he's just mean."
3	"He oughta change his nickname to 'Redeyes.' I don't think I've ever seen him sleep. After his shift, he spends the rest of the night partying or entertaining the ladies. Don't know how he fits so many hours into the day. Wish I had that kind of stamina."
4+	"Maybe he learned some deep dark secret when he worked for Crashcart. That might explain why he's so tense all the time."

"HAWKEYE" (GORDON KURTZ)

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 6)

Any Street or Fixer contact.

Shadowland: Target Number 9/Search Time 24 hours

Successes	Results
0	"Sure, I know Hawkeye ... all three of them. Then there're the twelve street sams named Nemesis, all four deckers who go by Datastream, and eighty-three riggers named Speed. Maybe if you slots didn't all pick such drekky names, I could tell you apart, eh [insert character's street name here]?"
1	"Hawkeye? Yeah, I know him. A little arrogant, but a decent enough guy—decent meaning that he won't shoot you in the back."
2	"He gets around a lot. He's a pretty big supplier when it comes to, umm ... things of a chemical nature. Always has top-notch stuff, too."
3	"He has to be getting this stuff from one of the corps. If he is, I wonder if they're paying him to use the SINless as guinea pigs, or if he's selling on the side to supplement his paystick."
4+	"Something's getting at him. He's been real edgy for the past three months or so—unless it was just the heat."

SHAWN FERRER

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 5)

Any Paramedic, Corporate or CAS Military contact.

Shadowland: Target Number 7/Search Time 24 hours

Successes	Results
0	"Shawn Ferrer—yeah, I know a guy by that name. He's a novahot programmer. Graduated from Rice University a year ahead of me, works for Ares. If what I hear is true, he could end up putting Ares in the same ballpark as any of the Japanese corps' Matrix divisions."
1	"Kind of a quiet guy. Doesn't talk much. I guess you have to respect his privacy, you know?"
2	"I kinda wonder if he has any skeletons in his closet. Maybe he worked for the Azzies before he came here, but doesn't want anyone to know."
3	"Or maybe it's the time he spent in the CAS military a few years back. He came pretty well recommended from them, according to his bio. Never tells any war stories, though."
4+	"Funny, but there must have been an error in the data entry. His bio lists him as a dwarf—ain't that weird?"

"MR. BROWN" (EARL BROWN)

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 9)

Any Policlub or UCAS Military contact.

Shadowland: Target Number 10/Search Time 48 hours

Successes	Results
0–1	"Brown was a small-time hood, got shot in the head after trying to rob a bank. He might as well have been named 'Mr. Drek.'"
2	"Mr. Brown? Just what are you mixed up with, chummer?"
3	"Brown's bad news. Really bad news. He got a dishonorable discharge from the UCAS Army last decade. Nobody knows why except those involved, but scuttlebutt says he was ejected for brutality."
4+	"Even stranger, he was an unofficial liaison to General Trahn during the Compensation Army thing last year. Under an alias, of course, but I'm sure it was him."

CAST OF SHADOWS

The characters listed below do not include any Edges and Flaws from **The Shadowrun Companion: Beyond the Shadows.** The gamemaster can customize these characters with any Edges and Flaws of his or her choice in order to play up their individuality and their possible links to Brown. Alternatively, the gamemaster can use Edges and Flaws as red herrings.

SETH PALATINE

Seth was born in the mid-twenty-teens and grew up amid a changing world. His father and two sisters died from VITAS-II before he was ten. Poor, and with his mother unable to land a job, Seth and his mother lived off of government money throughout Seth's childhood. Desperate to keep him off the street and out of the gangs, Seth's mother taught him to believe in Islam, nurturing him on the words of the prophet Mohammed instead of the newest trid show. When Seth was old enough to think about a career, he chose to be a paramedic so that he could be among the first to find those in need of healing. He worked as a paramedic at Seattle's Nordstrom Clinic until DocWagon bought it in 2043.

In early 2049, a Sons of Sauron response to Humanis Policlub strikes into the Ork Underground left 38 people dead and hundreds wounded. The Sons set off a bomb in an almost exclusively human low-rent housing facility, and Seth's mother was among the injured victims. Her health was already failing and she died from complications not long afterward. Seth blames the Sons of Sauron for her death and has never forgiven them for their actions.

Seth almost always acts in a business-like manner, masking his feelings from others and, most of the time, from himself. After almost twenty years of being on the front lines of Seattle's ongoing street war as a paramedic, he feels vulnerable and threatened when showing his true emotions. His weariness shows in the deep worry lines that mark his face.

Attributes

Body: 4	Intelligence: 4
Quickness: 5	Willpower: 5
Strength: 3	Essence: 6
Charisma: 3	Reaction: 4

Initiative: 4 + 1D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 2/3
Body Index: 1

Skills

Armed Combat 1 [Clubs 3, AZ-150 Stun Baton 5]
Athletics: 3
Biology 2 [Medicine 4]
Biotech: 6
Car: 3
Cybertechnology: 3
Etiquette (Corporate): 3
Etiquette (DocWagon): 5
Etiquette (Street): 3
Firearms 2 [Light Pistols 4, Beretta 110-T 6]
Gunnery 1 [Vehicle Cannons 3]
Leadership 2 [Commercial 4]
Negotiation 1 [Fast Talk 3]
Unarmed Combat 2 [Subduing Combat 4]
Urban Stealth: 3

Bioware

Orthoskin (2) [+1 Impact, +1 Ballistic]

Gear

AZ-150 Stun Baton [6S Stun]
Beretta Model 110-T [Light Pistol, 12 (clip), SA, fires gel rounds at 4L Stun, w/three extra clips]
Chrysler-Nissan Jackrabbit
DocWagon Armor Jacket (5/3)
DocWagon Kit (see p. 34)
Flash-Pak w/two battery recharges
Micro Flare

VIVIANNE GELDHAUSMANN

Viv is the team's psychiatrist; she graduated eighth in her class at Cambridge. She uses her talents primarily when dealing with individuals suffering from cyberpsychosis. She is well-trained in medicine, and can fill in ably for any of the other paramedics when necessary. Her cheery attitude and bright smile are a great help to the rest of the team in coping with the day-to-day horrors that they witness. Viv walks with a slight limp, the legacy of a gunshot to the left leg that she received while pulling a client from a gang war a few years back.

Unfortunately, Viv's smile is not as bright as it once was. In 2051 she married a photojournalist named Jacob, who worked as an informant for Lone Star in order to make ends meet while looking for an affiliate to pick him up. He used his cybercamera to capture crime footage for use in prosecuting criminals; during the Ancients fracas in late 2052, he was shot for providing information to Lone Star that was crucial in proving that the Ancients were not behind the gang war that engulfed the city. His murder was never solved, but losing him permanently dampened Viv's bright outlook on life.

Attributes

Body: 3	Intelligence: 4
Quickness: 3	Willpower: 4
Strength: 3	Essence: 6
Charisma: 5	Reaction: 3

Initiative: 3 + 1D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 2/2

Skills
Armed Combat 1 [Clubs 3, AZ-150 Stun Baton 5]
Athletics: 3
Biology 1 [Medicine 3]
Biotech: 4
Car: 2
Cybertechnology: 2
Etiquette (Corporate): 2
Etiquette (DocWagon): 5
Etiquette (Street): 2
Firearms 1 [Light Pistol 3, Ares Crusader MP 5]
Negotiation: 5
Psychology: 5
Unarmed Combat 1 [Subduing Combat 3]
Urban Stealth: 2

Gear
Ares Crusader MP [Light Pistol, 40 (clip), SA/BF, firing gel rounds at 4L Stun, w/two extra clips]
AZ-150 Stun Baton [6S Stun]
DocWagon Armor Jacket (5/3)
Doc Wagon Kit (see p. 34)
Flash-Pak w/two battery recharges
Micro Flare
Necklace looped through a man's ring

GORDON "HAWKEYE" KURTZ

Gordon was always a ladies' man. Any metatype, any ethnicity and even a few sasquatches were fair game. After becoming a paramedic, Gordon found that there weren't enough hours in the day for him to party hard and still do his job. One of many former Crashcart employees hired by DocWagon in late 2052, Gordon discovered that working for DocWagon was even more time-consuming than his Crashcart job had been. He started using stimulants to keep himself awake for long stretches so that he could fit his social life into his demanding work schedule. Eventually he began to depend on them to keep going, averaging only ten to fifteen hours of sleep per week. In order to pay for his stimulant habit, he is embezzling money and supplies from DocWagon and selling them to his stimulant suppliers.

Gordon is in his late twenties, but still looks about eighteen. He is known for his jovial manner and sharply funny one-liners, but becomes bitter and mean when his current dose of stimulant starts to wear off. He will often single out one person to pick on and rag them until he's in danger of getting punched in the mouth.

Attributes

Body: 5 (7)	Willpower: 4
Quickness: 5	Essence: 6
Strength: 4	Magic: 6
Charisma: 4	Reaction: 3
Intelligence: 2	

Initiative: 3 + 1D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 3/3 (2 extra dice due to Combat Sense)

Skills
Armed Combat 1 [Clubs 3, AZ-150 Stun Baton 5]
Athletics: 5
Biotech 5 [First Aid 7]
Car: 3
Firearms 2 [Heavy Pistol 4, Ares Predator II 6]
Gunnery 1 [Vehicle Cannons 3]
Etiquette (Corporate): 3
Etiquette (DocWagon): 3
Etiquette (Street): 4
Negotiation 3 [Fast Talk 5]
Unarmed Combat 2 [Subduing Combat 4]
Urban Stealth: 3

Gear
Ares Predator II [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, firing gel rounds at 7M Stun, w/three extra clips]
AZ-150 Stun Baton [6S Stun]
DocWagon Armor Jacket (5/3)
DocWagon Kit (see p. 34)
Eurocar Westwind 2000 w/notches along the dashboard
Flash-Pak w/two battery recharges
Micro Flare

Adept Powers

Combat Sense (2)	Pain Resistance (1)
Improved Body (2)	

SHAWN FERRER

Growing up as a dwarf in the heart of the CAS wasn't easy, but Shawn managed to endure the odd stares and racial slurs. It helped that he was tall for his race as well as accomplished in sports, and by the time he finished high school the other kids referred to him as "a respectable halfer." He joined the CAS military in 2048 and spent most of his time as a transport pilot, becoming proficient "behind the jack" of various vehicles. He stood out as the only metahuman serving in his unit, but tried to please his human companions as well as he could.

In mid-2051, three months before he was due to muster out, he was piloting an LCHC (Landing-Craft Hover-Craft) during training maneuvers along the Florida coastline when his vehicle was attacked by Caribbean League pirates and capsized. He nearly drowned, and afterwards came to believe that his fellow grunts didn't try to save him because he was a dwarf—though they considered him "a respectable halfer," they didn't consider him enough of an equal to risk their lives for him.

After he mustered out, he used most of his incentive money for plastic surgery to make his ears look "human." At the Atlanta unemployment office, his versatility with different types of vehicles landed him an opening as a DocWagon rigger, and he also received paramedic training in March of 2053. He was assigned to Expert Team Three nine months later.

Shawn's traumatic military experience left him with claustrophobia, though it does not affect him when rigging. He speaks softly and slowly, rarely meeting the eyes of the person he is addressing. When he isn't working, he practices his yo-yoing skill.

Attributes

Body: 4	Intelligence: 3 (4)
Quickness: 3	Willpower: 4
Strength: 4	Essence: 1.4
Charisma: 2	Reaction: 3

Initiative: 3 + 1D6 (7 + 3D6 when rigging)
Threat/Professional Rating: 3/3
Body Index: .9

Skills
Armed Combat 1 [Edged Weapons 3, Knife 5]
Biotech 1 [First Aid 3]
Car: 3
Electronics 1 [Diagnostics 3]
Etiquette (DocWagon): 3
Firearms 2 [Pistols 4]
Gunnery: 4
Hovercraft 1 [Transport 3]
Military History 2 [CAS 4]
Rotorcraft: 3
Stealth (Urban): 3
Stealth (Wilderness): 3
Unarmed Combat 1 [Escrima 3]
Vectored Thrust 1 [VTOL 3]
Yo-yo 3 [Trick Yo-yoing 5]

Cyberware
Datajack
Commlink IV
Crypto Circuit HD (Level 4)
Orientation System
Telephone
Vehicle Control Rig (2)

Bioware
Cerebral Booster (1)
Orthoskin (1) [+1 Impact]

Gear
AZ-150 Stun Baton [6S Stun]
Hammerli Model 610S [Heavy Pistol, 6 (clip), SA, fires gel rounds at 4L Stun, w/three extra clips]
DocWagon Armor Jacket (5/3)
DocWagon Kit (see p. 34)
Flash-Pak w/two battery recharges
Micro Flare
Red Ryder Yo-yo

EARL BROWN

Soon after Earl joined the UCAS Army in the early 2040s, he agreed to be an experimental subject for the recently developed cybernetic tactical computer. After undergoing surgery, Earl was to use the tactical computer, laser designator and orientation system to provide pinpoint accuracy for laser-guided bombs and missiles in "black ops" assignments.

The experiment was successful, but the Army soon lost control of their subject. While on leave, Earl had a drunken disagreement with a dwarf Air Force officer, in which the officer permanently lost the use of his lower jaw after repeated connection with Earl's foot. The officer turned out to be a senator's son, and Earl's superiors could not shield him from the backlash. Earl was dishonorably discharged and served two years in federal prison.

Some time after his incarceration, Earl surfaced as a front man in pursuit of DNA samples. He started by hitting DocWagon clinics and hospitals with lots of force and lots of headlines on the evening trid. This in-your-face style did not suit Brown's employers, so he adopted more subtle methods in order to keep from ending up on the bottom of Puget Sound. Years with the tactical computer implanted in his head have begun to affect his thinking, and he has gradually become as cold and calculating as the computer's subroutines. Proficient with rifles and knives, he is incredibly skilled at extracting information from unwilling subjects. He speaks in ambiguous terms, never stating anything definitely; instead, he leaves people to draw their own conclusions.

Attributes

Body: 5	Intelligence: 4
Quickness: 6 (7)	Willpower: 3
Strength: 2 (3)	Essence: 0.6
Charisma: 4 (6)	Reaction: 5 (6)

Initiative: 5 (6) + 1D6 (2D6)
Threat/Professional Rating: 5/4
Body Index: 3.6

Skills

Armed Combat 1 [Edged Weapons 3, Knife 5]
Athletics 2 [Running 4]
Car: 3
Electronics 2 [Linking between Devices 4]
Electronics (B/R): 3
Etiquette: 3
Firearms 6 [Rifles 8, Barret Model 121 10]
Gunnery 4 [Missile/Rocket Launcher 6]
Interrogation 6 [Torture 8]
Leadership 2 [Tactics 4]
Military Theory 2 [Tactics 4]
Negotiation 1 [Bargain 3]
Psychology: 1
Stealth: 5
Throwing Weapons 2 [Non-Aerodynamic 4, Grenades 6]
Unarmed Combat: 5

Cyberware

Boosted Reflexes (1)
Cybereyes (with Display Link, Thermographic, and Rangefinder)
Datajack
Orientation System
Smartlink II
Tactical Computer (1)

Bioware

Damage Compensators (6)	Tailored Pheromones (2)
Enhanced Articulation	Trauma Damper
Muscle Augmentation (1)	

Gear

2 AFR-7 Flash Grenades
Barret Model 121 [Sniper, 14 (clip), SA, fires APDS rounds at 14D, w/1 extra clip], broken down and concealed in a Fuchi-7 carrying case
Camouflage Jacket [5/3], Urban pattern
Colt Cobra [SMG, 32 (clip), SA/BF/FA, firing APDS rounds at 6M, w/3 extra clips]
Cougar Fine Blade Knife [Short Blade, 3M]
Smartgoggles

MISSION: MARS

SECRETS AND LIES: A PROLOGUE

August 18, 2057

Doctor Robert Zeus leaned back in his chair and stretched, working the kinks out of his shoulders and neck. He really ought to know better than to spend so much time jacked in, especially since he was only browsing. But then, an old man was surely entitled to his few pleasures, wasn't he? He chuckled softly as he rubbed a particularly sore spot on his neck. He hadn't been able to resist the World Wide Web as a youngster, and the Matrix was a thousand times more fantastic. He hadn't grown up much in seventy-odd years.

Just a little while longer, he told himself. *One more dip into someplace interesting.* He jacked back in and found himself in the Public Square, Houston's public-access Matrix grid. A bewildering variety of icons rushed and meandered by amid a dazzling display of billboards, neon signs and bright electronic ad balloons. Each of these was a doorway to somewhere; all he had to do was choose one.

He hadn't caught up on much news lately—apart from the mess in the UCAS, of course. *Wonder if they've got anything new on that?* He ambled toward the huge, blinking letters of his favorite local trid station and stepped through them. He looked around the giant Newsroom—always reminded him of a starship bridge, this place—until he spied the big flatscreen on which the words "Current Events" wrote themselves out in calligraphic script over and over. He walked his icon through the flatscreen, and found himself surrounded by shouting newsboys in 1890s garb.

"Read all about it—Dunkelzahn's Last Will and Testament!" they cried as they darted up and down. "Posthumous Presidential Secrets Revealed—Sensational Bequests Shake Sixth World!"

So the grand old wyrm's still up to something, Zeus thought. He stopped the nearest newsboy and bought a paper. He unfolded it for a clear look at the front page—and what he saw turned the blood in his veins to ice-water.

Though they were badly reproduced and grainy—in keeping with the nineteenth-century look of the subsystem in which he stood—Zeus immediately recognized two of the three photographs. He'd spent too many hours staring at them to ever forget them—he and a very few other people, almost all of whom had died in all the years since. *It was supposed to be a secret. All these years, no one knew except the few of us. Where did the wyrm get these?* How *did he get these?*

With shaking hands, he folded the paper and tucked it under his arm. Time to jack out. He needed to think, to plan, to figure out what to do. Now that the Mars photos were out in the open, it was only a matter of time before someone paid him a visit. He didn't know who they'd send first … but they'd send someone. Someone to tie up the loose ends, to try to stuff the genie back into the bottle, regardless of how futile an effort that might be. And if he couldn't convince them that he'd keep his mouth shut, or find some other way to protect himself, he might end up very, very dead.

INTRODUCTION

In **Mission: Mars**, the player characters are a team of AresSpace security agents sent to track down the truth about the mysterious photos from Mars that appeared in Dunkelzahn's will (p. 35, **Portfolio of a Dragon: Dunkelzahn's Secrets**). Their investigations uncover a conspiracy of silence concerning a disastrous manned mission to Mars launched by the government, a subsequent cover-up, and the deliberate sabotage of a Mars mission launched by their employer. Throughout the adventure, the player characters must stay one step ahead of shadowy forces with a vested interest in keeping the secret and eliminating any loose ends—including the characters themselves.

BACKGROUND

In the year 2001, a NASA-sponsored mission to Mars made a startling discovery. From August through October of that year, robot probes took digital recordings of a sizable portion of the Martian surface; among the data sent back to earth were amazing images of several giant pyramid-like structures, as well as what appeared to be the skeleton of a large, unidentifiable creature.

NASA's top researchers chose not to release these unexpected, unsettling findings to the public. Instead, under the direction of the U.S. Department of Defense, NASA began making long-term plans for a top-secret manned mission to Mars to continue its investigation. This mission fell under the jurisdiction of Veil, a covert black-ops agency within the Defense Department that enjoyed the highest existing security clearance. Few people in or outside of the Defense Department knew that Veil existed, and even fewer knew of its mission.

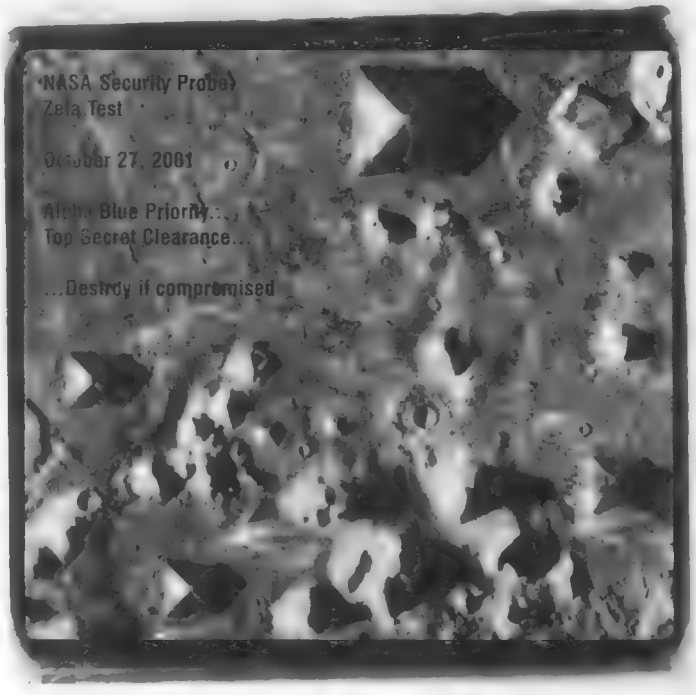
Ten years and billions of covert dollars later, NASA and Veil finally launched Operation Discovery, a secret eight-man exploratory mission to Mars. The crew made planetfall in July of 2011 and began surveying the Martian surface. They made several extra-vehicular excursions and gathered samples of the stone from which the pyramids were made and of the skeleton.

Five months into the mission, just before the astronauts were due to return to Earth, disaster struck. On December 24, 2011, the main cabin of the primary Mars module suffered a massive malfunction. Its orbit destabilized, and the ship crashed to the planet's surface. Only three of the eight astronauts survived; they limped back to Earth in the command capsule, along with most of the samples they had obtained.

ARES Space • Project CYDONIA • System T 2111.03 (Sub Route) Node Destroyed • December 8, 2042 • Crimson clearance only... ...Destroy if compromised

ARES Space • Project CYDONIA • System T 2111.03 (Sub Route) Node Destroyed • December 8, 2042 • Crimson clearance only... ...Destroy if compromised

NASA Sentry Probe • Alpha Test • August 8, 2001 • Alpha Blue Priority • Top Secret Clearance... • ...Destroy if compromised



NASA Security Probe • Zeta Test • October 27, 2001 • Alpha Blue Priority... • Top Secret Clearance... • ...Destroy if compromised

NASA and the Defense Department promptly hid the ship, the equipment and all evidence of the mission in a secret laboratory and storage facility located in an abandoned missile silo in the town of Haggard, Kansas. After extensive debriefing, the three surviving astronauts returned to active duty. Two of them died within the next five years. The third man, Lieutenant Colonel James Yavin of the U.S. Air Force, is the only mission member still living. The spacecraft, equipment and the stone and bone samples remain locked away in the silo.

Though the mission kept NASA researchers happy for years, it cost the agency billions of dollars, far more than could be plausibly buried in its budget. Following a misuse of funds scandal that led to the dismissal of most upper-echelon NASA administrators, the agency nearly went bankrupt. Ares Macrotechnology bought out the tottering space agency in 2016 and promptly turned NASA's still-valuable assets to the corporation's own uses.

Many of the remaining NASA staffers opted to join AresSpace after the buyout—among them Karl Xavier, a mid-level manager responsible for data collection and distribution. In addition to this "cover job," however, Xavier also worked for Veil. NASA had kept him and several other Veil agents on NASA's payroll to ensure the secrecy of Operation Discovery and to protect Veil's interests. Xavier continued to act as a Veil mole within AresSpace for years, keeping tabs on the corporation's activities.

In the early 2040s, AresSpace put the finishing touches on a Mars probe of its own. Named Project Cydonia, the mission involved several unmanned probes sent to photograph the surface of Mars in greater detail than any previous Mars mission (as far as the public and AresSpace knew). Concerned that the probes might discover traces of the crashed Operation Discovery craft, Xavier and his fellow Veil agents tried to keep AresSpace from launching Project Cydonia. When that effort failed, Veil ordered Xavier and his colleagues to intercept and sabotage all data received from the Cydonia probes. Xavier and a team of deckers managed to sabotage the probe data, turning it into 200 minutes of static and noise plus a single doctored image. The image showed a 1950s-style flying saucer hovering over the Martian landscape, with old-fashioned Apollo-mission equipment visible in the foreground. Project Cydonia ended up looking like a failure, and many members of its staff were soon bounced out the door or transferred to positions of little power or influence within AresSpace.

Meanwhile, AresSpace Security launched an investigation and discovered fragmentary evidence that someone had tampered with the corporation's Cydonia data banks. The evidence pointed to a local branch of the Mutual UFO Network, or MUFON, which had asked for and been denied access to the Project Cydonia findings. AresSpace Security concluded that MUFON had intercepted the probe data and substituted the flying-saucer picture. AresSpace hired a team of shadowrunners to obtain the original data, but the runners succeeded only in killing several MUFON members. The data was never retrieved—because MUFON didn't have it. Xavier and his deckers had planted the evidence implicating MUFON in the sabotage, to cover their own tracks.

A few years later, Xavier left AresSpace and Veil to start up his own aerospace company in Houston. Using his government contacts and the power of knowing the secret about the Mars debacle, Xavier quickly built Astrotech Industries into a profitable company. In the past few years it has become competitive with AresSpace, particularly in the area of government contracts, where Xavier has used his leverage to great advantage. Xavier has a copy of the original downloaded Project Cydonia data that clearly shows the pyramids, the strange skeleton and the crashed Operation Discovery ship and has parlayed that into success by hinting to certain government officials that he will release this data publicly unless they steer fat contracts his way (promising the same consequences, of course, if he dies unexpectedly).

Though Xavier has done well for himself since Project Cydonia failed, others were less fortunate. Benjamin Steele, a mid-level manager involved in data transmission and interpretation, found his career in a nose dive when the Cydonia data turned out to be useless. Though he remained employed, AresSpace reassigned him to the low-paying, low-status position of requisitions manager. By dint of sheer hard work, Steele has since regained a position of some authority, this time in AresSpace Security. Steele has never forgotten the Project Cydonia fiasco, and has been seeking the truth he is convinced lies behind it ever since. With the recent assassination of Dunkelzahn and the appearance of the Mars photos in the dragon's will, Steele may finally have the chance to get the answers he wants.

President-elect Dunkelzahn's Last Will and Testament offers a reward to the first person or persons who can explain the significance of three photos—two from the NASA Mars mission of 2001, plus the doctored "UFO" photo from Project Cydonia (pp. 29 and 35, **Portfolio of a Dragon: Dunkelzahn's Secrets**). How Dunkelzahn (or deckers working for him) managed to get access to these photos remains unknown. However, the exposure of the Project Cydonia photo and the revelation that there is more on Mars than the general public ever suspected matters a great deal to AresSpace.

Soon after the release of Dunkelzahn's will, Steele sought permission from his superiors to investigate the photos—the Cydonia photo in particular for personal reasons, and also in hopes of claiming the promised reward of a 1 percent interest in Ares Macrotechnology. Steele's superiors at AresSpace agreed, hoping that his success would keep the 1 percent "in the family." Steele immediately tapped an AresSpace Security team for the job.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Steele summons the player characters to his office at AresSpace headquarters in Houston, Texas. There, he gives them their orders: to investigate the photos in Dunkelzahn's will, paying particular attention to any connection between them. Steele has reasoned (correctly) that because the two NASA shots reveal images from Mars that the agency had kept secret, the Cydonia probes may have captured images meant to be kept secret as well—and that the UFO photo from Project Cydonia may have been manufactured as part of someone's attempt at a cover-up.

The characters have little to start with, aside from the photos themselves. Investigation into the NASA Security Probe mission reveals a few interesting references to Operation Discovery, the top-secret manned mission to Mars that took place in 2011. The characters can also learn the names of three people associated with Operation Discovery: Lieutenant Colonel James Yavin, the sole surviving astronaut; Dr. Robert Zeus, a scientist involved in the project; and Karl Xavier. Investigating Project Cydonia reveals references to Xavier again, as well as to the strike against MUFON.

Following up on these leads brings the characters to Colonel Yavin and Dr. Zeus, from whom they learn about Operation Discovery's disastrous end. They also learn about the secret storage facility in Haggard, Kansas, where the equipment and samples from the mission have been kept for the past forty-six years. Unknown to the characters, however, Veil has been keeping tabs on everything and everyone that might possibly lead to exposure of Operation Discovery. The characters' investigation prompts Veil to take steps to keep their secret. During the characters' meeting with Dr. Zeus, a Veil sniper assassinates the doctor and attempts to kill the characters as well.

If the characters meet with Xavier, he can tell them more of the real story than either of the other two men, including his personal involvement in sabotaging Project Cydonia. The characters may even be able to persuade Xavier to give them a copy of the original Cydonia data, in the interests of saving him from his former Veil associates.

If the characters travel to the secret storage facility, they discover the Operation Discovery command capsule, the samples brought back from Mars, the complete original data from NASA's 2001 Mars mission (including unreleased footage), and Veil's copy of the original data from Project Cydonia. While inside the storage facility, however, the characters run into a Veil cleanup team that has come to eliminate all evidence of the failed Mars mission. The Veil team regards the characters as just one more loose end, and will do their best to kill them. Assuming the player characters escape with their lives, the adventure ends with the characters returning to Houston and telling Steele what they've learned. AresSpace opts to keep quiet about the whole story, preferring to maintain friendly connections with the UCAS government rather than risk the retribution they are likely to face if they expose the truth.

A HELPING HAND

The Draco Foundation is interested in this investigation, and will try to aid the characters in uncovering the truth. If the characters hit a stumbling block or are having an especially difficult time following the trail of information, a Draco Foundation operative can contact them (directly or indirectly) and steer them back on track. This operative will not identify himself or his employer, nor will he take direct action against any Veil operatives.

The appearances and specific actions of the Draco Foundation agent (if any) is up to the gamemaster to determine. Use the Draco Foundation agent only if necessary to keep the adventure going; the players will find **Mission: Mars** much more enjoyable if they solve the mystery without help.

RUNNING MISSION: MARS

Mission: Mars is designed for 3 to 5 characters. Most of the adventure involves investigations rather than firefights, and so the characters' skills should reflect the demands of the story. Players will find the Computer skill and Corporate and Political Etiquette skills especially useful in this adventure. A decker character is useful, but not necessary.

Most of the adventure takes place in Houston, Texas, NASA's former home and the location of the AresSpace HQ. One encounter, **Tales of Hoffman,** takes place in a small town in western Kansas; AresSpace will arrange for the characters to fly to Kansas and provide them with a car when they arrive. The characters also have access to a company car should they need one at any time during the adventure.

As with all the adventures in this book, **Mission: Mars** offers players a chance to play characters who are not typical shadowrunners. In **Mission: Mars,** the characters are members of the Special Operations Division of AresSpace Security—essentially, the corporate equivalent of shadowrunners. Like runner teams, corporate security teams include deckers, magicians and combat types, and get involved every day in the down-and-dirty workings of the Sixth World. However, they also differ from typical runners in significant ways.

Corporate security agents spend quite a bit of time on intracorp competition, bragging to improve their reputations and actively soliciting the interesting jobs. No one wants to go from being one of Knight-Errant's golden boys this week to elementary-school lunch duty next week because a jealous rival spread nasty rumors. With regard to dress and gear, AresSpace agents typically dress in business suits, which may be armored if they so desire. Bulky body armor, however, is not acceptable as regulation on-the-job attire. In addition, corp security agents rarely carry excessive amounts of obvious cyberware.

CHARACTER CREATION

When creating corporate security characters, keep the following factors in mind. Discrimination is rife in the corporate security field, and so metahuman characters should be exceedingly rare—usually no more than one in any group, most likely an elf or a dwarf rather than an ork or a troll. Players must assign Priority C or higher to Skills to reflect the usual level of training of corporate secteams; in addition, each character must have at least two Knowledge Skills to reflect the fact that he or she has had some sort of education. Corporate security personnel make a high enough regular salary to maintain a Middle lifestyle.

Playing Other Types of Characters

Though this adventure is written specifically for a team of AresSpace security agents, it can also be run with other types of player characters if the gamemaster makes a few minor adjustments. For example, AresSpace or another interested party—a rival corporation or even the Draco Foundation—may hire a team of typical shadowrunners to investigate the photos. In this case, the adventure needs no tweaking, aside from changing a few names. Alternatively, the characters may be a team of journalists working for a pirate trid station (see **Smile, You're On Camera!,**

p. 114, **SRComp**). In this instance, the characters' goal might be to expose the truth once they discover it. In another twist, the characters may be UCAS Special Forces agents assigned to cover up the truth behind the original 2001 NASA mission. In this case, the characters would be called upon to destroy any evidence they might find, and might well end up doing a little wetwork. The cleanup crew referred to above would work for AresSpace or some other party instead of Veil (unless the gamemaster wants to get *really* twisted, and have one shadowy UCAS government agency working against another shadowy UCAS government agency in some kind of bizarre turf war). This option would also require other significant changes to the story, as the motivations of several gamemaster characters would change dramatically. Gamemasters interested in using this option should refer to **Trained to Be Ghosts**, p. 115 of **The Shadowrun Companion: Beyond the Shadows.**

INVESTIGATIONS

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

The recessed lighting in the corridor ceiling bathes the brushed-steel walls in a soft glow. Your footsteps echo as you stride down the hall toward the door marked "Briefing Room." Benjamin Steele, one of your bosses at AresSpace Security, is waiting for you inside that room. As usual, you have no idea what assignment he has in store for you.

When you walk in, Steele is seated in his usual spot at the far end of the table. Next to him is a small projector. "Good morning," he says, gesturing for you all to take your seats. "Let's get down to business."

As you sit, the lights go off and the screen flickers to life with three familiar images—the photos, supposedly from the surface of Mars, that recently surfaced in Dunkelzahn's last will and testament. Two of the photos are marked as belonging to NASA; the third came from an AresSpace mission, Project Cydonia. You wonder what these photos could possibly have to do with you … and you're not sure you'll like the answer.

HOOKS

This encounter starts the characters down a winding road toward the truth behind two secret Mars missions: the NASA mission of 2001 and the apparently failed AresSpace mission of 2011. The few sparse clues that Steele gives the characters should suggest that they will be untangling a deep cover-up, the kind that usually gets truth-seekers killed.

The investigative process is much like an onion; beneath each layer of information lies another, previously unsuspected layer. Each question the characters answer suggests two or three more questions. Before long, the characters should begin to dread what they might find out next.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Any mission that owes its existence to Dunkelzahn's will almost certainly means trouble, and this one is no exception. In this mission briefing, Steele assigns the characters to investigate the photos, find any connection between them, and discover the truth behind the AresSpace photo in particular. Simple enough for a group of well-trained security agents with the resources of a megacorp at their disposal … but as with all attempts to uncover secrets, this mission is fraught with great danger.

Steele begins the briefing with a little background information, including the AresSpace buyout of NASA in 2016. He tells the player characters about persistent rumors that some of NASA's records and files were not turned over to AresSpace, allegedly for reasons of national security. He also fills them in on Project Cydonia, the Mars probe launched by AresSpace in 2042 that turned out to be such a spectacular failure.

Steele says that the NASA Security and Sentry Probe photos from Dunkelzahn's will were apparently among the files kept from AresSpace by the then-US government in 2016. The photos, which were never made public, show evidence of possible life on Mars. Steele suspects that the people who kept the NASA data secret are still working for the Department of Defense, now part of the UCAS government.

He explains that shortly after the release of Dunkelzahn's will, he contacted the Draco Foundation about the photos. The Foundation was willing to tell him that, according to Dunkelzahn's research, some connection exists between the NASA photos and the photo from Project Cydonia. Dunkelzahn never managed to determine exactly what the link was, and Steele wants the characters to uncover it. The characters are to follow all possible leads, up to and including an investigation of the UCAS Department of Defense, if necessary. Steele believes in his bones that the Cydonia photo was tampered with, and wants to find the truth because the apparent failure of Cydonia cost him a great deal professionally and personally. He is betting that the connection between the Cydonia photo and the NASA photos will expose, or at least point toward, whatever really happened.

In addition to the photos themselves (p. 35, **Portfolio of a Dragon: Dunkelzahn's Secrets**), Steele provides the characters with passcodes that will allow them access to the data from Project Cydonia. Steele also gives the characters an operating budget of 100,000 nuyen, which they may spend at their discretion. AresSpace will arrange for whatever transportation the team requires for the mission. Steele offers whatever is left over from the budget to the characters as a bonus should they successfully complete their mission.

GETTING STARTED

The characters must begin by pursuing basic legwork on two primary topics: the NASA mission of 2001 and Project Cydonia. Either of these can lead them to Operation Discovery. The characters can start looking for clues from one of three primary sources: AresSpace, the UCAS government and independent contacts (including Shadowland). Using contacts requires a successful Etiquette Test. If the characters do not have any of the contacts listed as appropriate for each avenue of investigation, apply the **Friend of a Friend** rules (p. 63, **SRComp**).

The information available to the player characters is organized according to topic, then by source. The actual information

appears in the Success Tables at the end of this section; rules for obtaining that information and suggestions for guiding the characters' search appear below.

Decking the UCAS Matrix

Performing a Matrix search of AresSpace or UCAS government databases requires a decker to make a successful Computer Test against the target number given for the subject of his search. Steele has provided the characters with passcodes for the AresSpace system; the decker need only make Access and other Matrix tests when searching the UCAS government system. For player-character deckers, use the sample UCAS system on pages 153–55 of **Virtual Realities 2.0,** with the Veil host (below) connected to Host C (p. 154, **Virtual Realities 2.0**). When searching the UCAS system, the decker should make a Locate File System Test (see **System Tests,** p. 19, **Virtual Realities 2.0**) to find files that contain references to the NASA Security and Sentry Probes, Project Cydonia (yes, the government has been keeping tabs on AresSpace) or Operation Discovery, as appropriate. For NPC deckers running the UCAS government Matrix, see **NPC Deckers.**

Deckers running the UCAS/Veil host can obtain several files concerning the various subjects of the characters' investigations. Each file retrieved counts as a number of dice roll successes (specified in each topic of investigation) when determining how much the characters learn about each topic from the Success Tables. Any maximum number of successes listed represents the limits of the information available from a particular source. As always, the total number of successes achieved determines the amount of information the characters obtain.

The gamemaster can give as much detail as he or she wishes when the characters successfully retrieve a file. For example, rather than simply allowing the characters to obtain "files that contain information pertaining to the NASA Security Probe," the gamemaster might create a specific portion of such a file.

UCAS/Veil Host: Red-9/17/19/15/17/15
Paydata: 13
Data Density: 2D6 X 5

This host is part of a UCAS system located in DC, used by the Department of Defense and several agencies under the department's jurisdiction (including the secretive Veil). The system uses standard UMS architecture. The Security Sheaf is similar to that of Host C (p. 154, **Virtual Realities 2.0**), but the trigger steps are lower.

Security Sheaf

Trigger Step	Event
3	Probe-9
5	Tar Baby-8
7	Trap Trace-10 (Killer-9)
9	Passive Alert
11	Expert Construct (Armor +2 Defense/–2 Offense), Trace-8, Tar Baby-5, Marker-6
13	Cascading Blaster-9
15	Active Alert: Government decker alerted and will arrive next turn
17	Expert Construct (Armor and Shielding +2 Offense/–2 Defense), Black IC-8 (lethal), Acid-7
19	Cascading Black IC-7 (lethal)
21	Shutdown

NPC Deckers

If the player character team does not include a decker, they may either requisition the services of an AresSpace decker or hire a freelance decker (i.e., a shadowrunner). For the AresSpace decker, use the statistics for the Corporate Decker, p. 15 of the **Contacts** book, **SRII Gamemaster Screen.** Hiring a decker from the shadows will cost the characters big time. Decking into the UCAS government system is dangerous business, and no decker worth the name will do the job for less than 10,000 nuyen. For statistics, use the Elven Decker archetype (p. 54, **SRII**), or the Decker archetype (p. 79, **Virtual Realities 2.0**). For a borrowed or hired decker, the gamemaster can simplify Matrix searches by making a Computer Test against a target number equal to the appropriate Computer Search target number + 2. Add Hacking Pool dice to this test. For every 3 successes the hired decker achieves, he finds one file appropriate to the subject of his search. Each file then translates into a number of successes, specified in the following text, to be used on the Success Tables.

NASA SECURITY PROBE MISSION

Investigating the NASA mission of 2001 is easier said than done for several reasons. The mission took place more than fifty years ago, and NASA publicly revealed only a fraction of the data obtained. Sensitive information is difficult to get hold of, as most of it remains in secure datafiles.

Information from AresSpace

If the characters search AresSpace files dating back to the NASA buyout, they can find a few pieces of useful information. The Target Number for a computer search of AresSpace files is 4; a successful Computer Test yields files that contain the sparse public accounts of the NASA Security and Sentry Probe mission, as well as internal AresSpace documents hinting that NASA did not turn over all of the mission data to AresSpace after the buyout. The search may also yield a file containing the names of employees who transferred from NASA to AresSpace during the buyout; among them is Karl Xavier, whose name also appears in files pertaining to Project Cydonia and Operation Discovery.

Few people currently working for AresSpace were employed at NASA (or even alive!) at the time of the 2001 NASA mission, but many employees have their own theories about the Mars probe that they would be happy to share with the characters. To get information from AresSpace contacts requires a successful Etiquette (Corporate) (6) Test. Appropriate contacts include the Company Man, Corporate Secretary, Corporate Decker, and other Corporate contacts, though not Mr. Johnson.

The decker can search the AresSpace system using Steele's passcodes. To find and retrieve files, the decker need only make a Computer (3) Test. The characters can earn up to 7 successes for information on the NASA mission from AresSpace records and contacts.

Information from the UCAS Government

If the characters search UCAS government records for data about the NASA mission, the search will lead them to the UCAS Department of Defense system, and also to the system used by Veil. High security will make this search extremely difficult, but can yield much more useful information than searching AresSpace records.

The Target Number for a computer search of the UCAS system is 7. If a character making such a search fails any tests, trace programs within the system will alert Veil officials, who will initiate a clean-up operation (see **The Clean-up Crew,** p. 60). If a player-character decker wants to search the UCAS system, refer to the UCAS/Veil host described on page 57. The decker can find 5 files that contain information pertaining to the NASA mission.

The characters can also talk to contacts within the UCAS government by making a successful Etiquette (Government) (6) Test. Appropriate contacts include the Government Official, Government Agent, Mercenary and other Government contacts.

Independent Contacts

Shadowland is an especially useful independent contact for gathering information about the NASA mission of 2001 (see pp. 67–68, **SRComp**). Other appropriate contacts include Media Producers and Reporters, any of whom might plausibly have sniffed out rumors of a cover-up or some information pertaining to the NASA mission. Getting anything useful from any of these contacts requires a successful Etiquette (8) Test of the appropriate type.

The characters can earn up to 5 successes for information on the NASA mission from contacts outside AresSpace and the UCAS government.

PROJECT CYDONIA

The characters have free access to AresSpace's records, and so can search them for information relatively easily. They already know from Steele's briefing that Project Cydonia is a sensitive subject because it was such a humiliating and expensive failure. What should have been several minutes of digital footage from the surface of Mars turned out to be static and a single, obviously faked image, and no one knows precisely why. Many of the people associated with Project Cydonia lost their jobs; those who remained, like Steele, were demoted to less-than-glamorous positions in AresSpace.

Whether searching computer files or talking to contacts, the characters can learn the names of a couple of people who have become major shareholders of rival aerospace companies. One of these is Karl Xavier, who (unknown to AresSpace) helped arrange the sabotage of the Cydonia probe's transmissions. The company Xavier now runs, Astrotech Industries, does quite a bit of covert work for the UCAS government. If the characters wish to learn more about Xavier or Astrotech Industries, refer to **Legwork,** p. 71.

The characters can also find evidence suggesting that the Cydonia transmissions were tampered with by a local branch of MUFON, a UFO watch group. Fragmentary records and/or a conversation with the right person indicates that AresSpace launched a retaliatory strike against the group. The evidence of tampering strongly suggests that the original transmission was copied before being sabotaged, and there is no reason to doubt that this clean copy might still exist.

Information from AresSpace

Searching the AresSpace computer system requires a successful Computer (4) Test. Talking to contacts within AresSpace about Project Cydonia, including Steele, requires a successful Etiquette (Corporate) (6) Test. Appropriate contacts include the Company Man, Corporate Secretary, Corporate Decker, and other Corporate contacts, though not Mr. Johnson.

Information from the UCAS Government

The Defense Department—Veil in particular—has kept a watchful eye on AresSpace ever since the NASA buyout, lest anyone at AresSpace uncover any trace of Operation Discovery. They kept careful track of the Cydonia probe, and sabotaged it the moment it threatened to expose their secret.

Searching the UCAS/Veil computer system for information on Cydonia requires a successful Computer (5) Test. If the character making the search fails any tests, trace programs within the system will alert Veil officials, who will initiate a clean-up operation. If a team decker wants to search the Matrix, he or she can find three files that contain information pertaining to Project Cydonia. Each of these files retrieved is the equivalent of 2 successes.

Talking to UCAS government contacts about Project Cydonia requires a successful Etiquette/Government (6) Test. Appropriate contacts include the Government Agent, Government Official and other Government contacts.

Independent Contacts

Useful contacts for investigating Project Cydonia include Shadowland, Media Producers, Reporters, or Corporate contacts outside Ares. Using any of these contacts requires a successful Etiquette (7) Test of the appropriate type. The characters can earn up to 8 successes for information on Project Cydonia from contacts outside AresSpace and the UCAS government.

OPERATION DISCOVERY

Investigating the 2001 NASA mission eventually leads the characters to Operation Discovery. Further investigation into this secret mission reveals the names of three men associated with it, one of whom is Karl Xavier. The other two are Lieutenant James Yavin, the only still-living astronaut on the mission; and Robert Zeus, a scientist who studied the samples obtained from the Martian surface.

The characters can learn nothing about Operation Discovery from AresSpace computer files or contacts; no one in Ares Macrotechnology knows anything about Operation Discovery.

Information from the UCAS Government

The characters can obtain information about Operation Discovery from the UCAS computer system, though doing so is difficult. The Target Number for a computer search of the UCAS system is 9. If a character making such a search fails any tests, trace programs within the system will alert Veil officials. If a team decker wants to search the Matrix, he or she can find 5 files in this

NASA MARS MISSION

Successes	Results
0–2	It is common knowledge that NASA withheld data from the Mars mission. The photos in Dunkelzahn's will were not part of the data originally released to the public.
4–5	The tags on the NASA photos in the will match those associated with the NASA Security and Sentry probes, suggesting that they are legitimate.
6–8	Though NASA has never publicly acknowledged it, many people, especially members of UFO watch groups, insist that NASA conducted a follow-up mission to the 2001 expedition.
9–10	Several years after the first Mars mission, NASA conducted a top-secret mission known as Operation Discovery. Many people speculate that this was the much-rumored follow-up to the original Mars probe.
11+	Operation Discovery was a top-secret mission to Mars, initiated as a follow-up to the data from the NASA Security and Sentry probes—specifically, to the photos later publicized in Dunkelzahn's will.

PROJECT CYDONIA

Successes	Results
0–2	Project Cydonia failed, but not because of AresSpace. Ample evidence exists that someone tampered with the data received from the Cydonia probe.
3–4	The data included several minutes of static and a single, clear image that matches the photo in Dunkelzahn's will. An analysis of the data showed signs of tampering.
5–6	The traces of tampering pointed to a MUFON (Mutual UFO Network) cell. This UFO watch group had requested and been denied access to the data from the mission.
7–8	Rumors abound within AresSpace and all over Shadowland that Ares launched a punitive strike against the MUFON cell; several members were reportedly killed.
9+	One of the people involved in Project Cydonia was Karl Xavier, who transferred to AresSpace from NASA at the time of the buyout. He has since left AresSpace and now runs Astrotech Industries, a rival aerospace corporation.

OPERATION DISCOVERY

Successes	Results
0–3	Operation Discovery was a top-secret project launched by NASA shortly after the 2001 mission, to further investigate the data received from the 2001 Mars probes.
4–6	Operation Discovery was a manned mission that lasted from August of 2011 to January of 2012. One of the people involved in the project was Karl Xavier, who transferred from NASA to AresSpace at the time of the buyout in 2016.
7–8	Lt. Colonel James Yavin is the sole surviving astronaut; Dr. Robert Zeus (pronounced ZAY-US), a scientist involved in post-mission research, is also still around.
9–10	Operation Discovery ended in disaster on December 24, 2011, when part of the spaceship suffered a massive systems failure and crashed to the surface of Mars. Three of the eight-man crew survived and returned to earth, with samples.
11	The samples include stone from the pyramids and bones from the skeleton shown in the photos in Dunkelzahn's will.
12	The capsule used in the mission, along with samples and research data, are stored in an abandoned missile silo beneath the Hoffman farm in Kansas.

system that contain information pertaining to Operation Discovery. Each file retrieved is the equivalent of 4 successes.

Talking to UCAS government contacts about Operation Discovery requires a successful Etiquette (Government) (9) Test. Appropriate contacts include the Government Agent, Government Official and other Government contacts. No one really wants to discuss this extremely sensitive subject, and so the characters will have to be quite persuasive to get anywhere with their inquiries.

Independent Contacts

Appropriate independent contacts for learning about Operation Discovery include Shadowland, Media Producers or Reporters, or any contacts who might plausibly be conspiracy buffs. Using any of these contacts requires a successful Etiquette (9) Test of the appropriate type. The characters can earn up to 5 successes for information on Operation Discovery from contacts outside AresSpace and the UCAS government.

WHERE TO NEXT?

The characters' next move is to follow up on whatever clues they obtained. If they want to investigate Lieutenant Colonel James Yavin, go to **Lieutenant Colonel Yavin.** If they want to investigate Dr. Robert Zeus, go to **Dr. Zeus** (p. 61). If they want to investigate Karl Xavier, go to **Mr. Xavier, I Presume?** (p. 64). If they racked up 12 or more successes in their investigation of Operation Discovery, they have learned about the storage facility in Kansas; go to **Tales of Hoffman** (p. 67) if they want to investigate the old missile silo.

The Clean-up Crew

Shortly after the characters begin their investigation, Veil sends a team to clear away the remnants of Operation Discovery. The gamemaster determines exactly how and when the characters confront these agents to best suit his adventure. The characters definitely run into the clean-up crew in **Tales of Hoffman** (p. 67); other encounters also include suggestions for using them if the gamemaster decides that he wants them to show up. The clean-up crew is led by John Silver, a former mercenary, and Jason "Eldritch" Mason, a combat mage. Six well-trained UCAS soldiers make up the rest of the team. Statistics for the soldiers appear in **Tales of Hoffman.** Statistics for Silver and Eldritch appear in **Cast of Shadows,** p. 71.

DEBUGGING

The biggest potential problem arises if the characters fail to obtain any information about Operation Discovery, because that secret mission is the key to the whole story. If this happens, consider using a Draco Foundation agent to drop the characters a hint, but try not to be too heavy handed.

If the characters make we-don't-want-to-go noises, remind the players that they are playing employees of AresSpace; refusal is not an option, unless they'd like to spend the rest of their careers ticketing non-Ares-owned cars in the company parking lot.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL YAVIN

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Quite a day this is turning out to be ... you're on your way to chat with a survivor of a top-secret manned mission to Mars. Every conspiracy nut on the planet would give his right arm to be in your pin-striped suit right now. A little extra digging told you that Lieutenant Colonel Yavin, a retired Air Force pilot, was living at Ellington Air Force base not far from Houston. Seems almost like Providence, doesn't it?

As you pull up to the gates of the base, the guards wave you to a stop. One of them walks over to the driver's side as you roll down your window. "Can I help you?"

HOOKS

In this encounter, the characters meet an eyewitness to one of the biggest cover-ups in U.S. and UCAS history. Lieutenant Colonel James Yavin is a cynical, jaded, embittered man who long ago lost whatever faith he had in his country. As he tells the characters his story, they should feel somewhat naive, realizing that a lot of things go on in the world of which they know nothing.

Yavin's home is full of Air Force and NASA memorabilia, constant reminders of the life he left behind. Among the items are several photos of Yavin with various types of aircraft. Two of these photos show Yavin in front of two different spacecraft. The first is a NASA space shuttle; the second is a large rocket similar to the Saturn V rocket.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Tell It To Them Straight assumes that the characters have spent a little time looking for Lieutenant Colonel Yavin. If the players and gamemaster wish to, they can play out the legwork involved in finding Yavin.

Retired now for twenty years from active duty, Lieutenant Colonel Yavin lives at Ellington Air Force base near Houston. During his time in the U.S. Air Force, Yavin also served with NASA as a space shuttle pilot, and was a member of the Operation Discovery crew. Born and bred in Texas, Yavin joined the CAS Air Force after the southern states seceded from the old United States. He is 75 years old, with thinning gray hair and a slight build.

Once the characters decide to visit Yavin, their first challenge is to get on the base. If the characters think to call ahead, Yavin agrees to meet with them and arranges for the guards to let them in when they arrive. If the characters tell the guards they are here to see Lieutenant Colonel Yavin, they are permitted to pass the gates.

If the characters arrive unannounced, they'll have a slightly harder time of it. Their best bet is to tell the truth—that they want to visit Lieutenant Colonel Yavin—without disclosing any more than they must. They might state that they are here on behalf of AresSpace, but certainly should not spill all the details of their assignment. Unless they come up with a patently unbelievable cover story, the guards should let them pass, but will take down their names and their vehicle's license number. While the characters are busy with Yavin, the guards will check their IDs and license. Unless the characters use their real names or have solid cover IDs

(certainly possible, given the resources available to AresSpace Security), the guards will discover whatever deception the characters have perpetrated and will be waiting for them when they leave.

Once past the gate, the characters can proceed to Yavin's home. The guards will have alerted him to his visitors' arrival, and so he will be waiting for them. If the characters called ahead, Yavin will greet them with what passes for friendliness. If they arrive unannounced, he will be suspicious of them, but will agree to speak with them unless they are obnoxious or rude.

CAS Air Force Guards (4)

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	Armor
4	4	4	3	3	3	6	3	5/3

Initiative: 3 + 1D6

Threat/Professional Rating: 3/3

Skills: Etiquette (Political/Street) 2/2, Firearms 5, Unarmed Combat 4

Gear: Armor Jacket (5/3), Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M, 1 spare clip]; HK227-S in guard shed [SMG, 28 (clip), SA/BF, 7M, 1 spare clip]

IS IT SAFE TO TALK HERE?

Since the release of the Mars photos in Dunkelzahn's will, Veil has placed surveillance devices in the homes and offices of everyone who knows anything about Operation Discovery, including Lieutenant Colonel Yavin. If the characters wish to use a bug scanner in Yavin's house, he'll allow it, though he doesn't see how anyone could have gotten in to plant listening devices. To use the bug scanner, one of the characters makes a Success Test using a number of dice equal to the scanner's rating against the rating of the bugs planted (Target Number 7). Veil has planted four bugs, and locating each one requires 1 success. If the characters achieve only 3 successes on the Success Test, for example, they find only three of the bugs.

If the characters wish to use a jammer or white-noise generator to camouflage their conversation with Yavin, have one of them make a Success Test using a number of dice equal to the rating of the jammer or generator against the rating of the bugs. Any successes achieved means that they have successfully jammed the bugs' transmissions.

WHAT COLONEL YAVIN KNOWS

Yavin can give the characters several key pieces of information if they ask the right questions. Paraphrase the bulleted points below for Yavin's responses. His story should sound fantastic, and his answers should contain phrases such as, "If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes," and "I know it sounds incredible, but ... ." His story should astound the characters, even if they don't reveal their reactions.

- Yavin has been expecting someone to contact him once he saw the photos in Dunkelzahn's will; he thought agents from the UCAS CIA or Department of Defense would show up.
- If the characters show him the photos, he recognizes the two from the NASA probes.
- He was one of an eight-man crew on a secret manned mission to Mars called Operation Discovery.
- On December 24, 2011, the main capsule suffered a critical malfunction and crashed on the surface of Mars, killing the five crewmen inside it.
- Yavin and the two remaining astronauts, both of whom have since died, returned in the command ship. They brought back samples from the skeleton and pyramids shown in the recently released photos.
- Though Yavin and the others didn't know it at the time, the mishap that crippled the main capsule occurred at almost the same moment that the great dragon Ryumyo appeared on Earth to signal the Awakening. The timing may be a coincidence, but Yavin is convinced that the two events are connected.
- The mission cost NASA billions of dollars, too much to be plausibly buried anywhere in the budget. Operation Discovery left NASA on the verge of bankruptcy, staved off by the AresSpace buyout in 2016.
- If asked about Dr. Zeus, Yavin tells the characters that Zeus was one of the scientists who debriefed the astronauts and performed studies on them, their equipment and the samples they brought back. Beyond that, he knows only that Dr. Zeus lives somewhere near or in Houston. The two men have not spoken to each other for more than thirty years.

Once the characters finish talking with Yavin, they can leave the base without incident, unless they gave false information to the guards. If so, the guards will prevent the characters from leaving. Unless the characters can talk (or buy) their way past the guards, they will be detained by CAS Military Police. The MPs will allow them one phone call each. If they contact Steele at AresSpace, he arranges for their release the next day.

DEBUGGING

The only potential problem occurs if the characters antagonize Lieutenant Colonel Yavin or the base guards. If they give Yavin a hard time, they may not get all the information he has to offer. If they make trouble with the guards, they may be forced off the base or arrested. In the latter case, the characters are held for a day until Steele bails them out.

DR. ZEUS

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Doctor Zeus ... what a name. Wasn't Doctor Zeus the name of the head scientist from an old sci-fi movie ... something to do with apes? Strange name or not, this Zeus guy looks like a solid lead on Operation Discovery.

You wish he hadn't insisted on meeting in a public place. You're stuck waiting for him to call you with the meeting time and location, when you could be chasing down some of your other leads. But he can probably tell you quite a bit—so it's worth a little heel-kicking time to humor the guy.

After an hour, the telecom beeps. A voice-only message comes over it: "Brook Park. 2 p.m., near the entrance gate." Dr. Zeus—assuming that was him—sounds nervous.

You wonder if Dr. Zeus has watched one too many spy films ... or if maybe he's got reason to be afraid.

HOOKS

This encounter gives the characters a few more details, but also lets them see first-hand the deadly consequences of probing into long-kept secrets. Make them feel paranoid, seeing potential assassins behind every bush.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Tell It To Them Straight assumes that the characters have attempted to get in touch with Dr. Zeus. If they haven't, the gamemaster may sketch out that initial attempt. The characters may call Zeus's home or office, but will get no response other than a terse, "Don't come here. I'll call you back and tell you where."

Dr. Robert Zeus is frightened, and for good reason. He recognized the photos in Dunkelzahn's will and knows that their appearance can only mean trouble. Like Lieutenant Colonel Yavin, he has been under electronic surveillance since the release of the photos. Veil's clean-up crew (see **Investigations,** p. 60) has been monitoring his movements and conversations for the past few days, including his most recent telecom call to the characters. The clean-up crew therefore knows about the meet and will set up a sniper to eliminate Dr. Zeus (see **Pop Goes the Doctor's Head!**).

Dr. Zeus is 72 years old, but looks younger. He is of average height and build, with thick gray hair and glasses. He wants to meet the characters in an open, public place in the hopes of preventing eavesdropping. He also believes that anyone who might be after him would prefer to make a move in a secluded spot rather than risk being seen by a crowd of civilians. Unfortunately, he's wrong. Zeus meets the characters at the park entrance and leads them toward a small grove of trees. Once near the trees, he will ask the characters what they want from him.

WHAT DR. ZEUS KNOWS

Dr. Zeus can provide the characters with several pieces of key information if they ask the right questions. Paraphrase the bulleted points below for his responses. Unlike Lieutenant Colonel Yavin, Dr. Zeus takes pride in his work for Operation Discovery and speaks of the project with a hint of nostalgia. He paces as he talks, chain-smoking nervously. The information he has to offer appears in roughly the order that he relates it, unless the characters' questions lead him to do otherwise. What the characters ask and in what order can therefore make a real difference if the assassin kills the doctor before he has revealed everything (see **Pop Goes the Doctor's Head!**).

• Like Lieutenant Colonel Yavin, Dr. Zeus has been expecting someone to contact him ever since he saw the photos in Dunkelzahn's will—most likely agents of the UCAS CIA or Veil. If the characters ask about Veil, Dr. Zeus explains that Veil is the organization that headed up Operation Discovery. (On paper, of course, Veil does not exist.)

• If the characters show him the photos, he recognizes the two from the NASA probes.

• He and a few other scientists, all of whom have since died, were assigned to Operation Discovery to help debrief the astronauts and to study the samples brought back from Mars.

• The samples included pieces of bone from the skeleton and stone slabs from the pyramids. Also among the mission data was digital footage from the surface of Mars that offers a close-up view of the skeleton and pyramids.

• The samples, mission data and remaining equipment are stored beneath an abandoned missile silo in Kansas. The silo can be reached from the storm cellar of Hoffman farm.

• If asked about Project Cydonia, Dr. Zeus says that its failure had nothing to do with AresSpace, nor did MUFON tamper with the Cydonia data. Though he has no evidence, Dr. Zeus is convinced that Veil agents sabotaged the project.

• If asked about Karl Xavier, Dr. Zeus recognizes the name. He says Xavier was a NASA executive who transferred to AresSpace at the time of the buyout, and who has since set up his own aerospace company in the Houston area. The company, Astrotech Industries, is a competitor of AresSpace.

• The ultimate failure of Operation Discovery cost NASA billions of dollars that it couldn't plausibly bury in the budget. The vast expenditures drove NASA to the brink of bankruptcy just before AresSpace bought out the agency in 2016.

• There was no evidence of magical interference during Operation Discovery, but Dr. Zeus admits that knowledge of magic at the time was extremely limited.

• If asked about Lieutenant Colonel Yavin, Dr. Zeus tells the characters that Yavin was one of the astronauts who manned the mission. Beyond that, he knows only that Yavin lives on Ellington Air Force Base near Houston. The two have not spoken to each for more than thirty years.

POP GOES THE DOCTOR'S HEAD!

At some point during the characters' discussion with Dr. Zeus, a sniper will kill the good doctor with a single shot to the head. In mid-sentence, one side of the doctor's skull should burst with a spray of grayish-pink mist as the bullet takes off a large chunk of his head. The sniper is one of Veil's clean-up crew, and is using a silenced Ranger Arms SM-3 from 300 yards away. He has spent the past 2 game rounds aiming at Dr. Zeus, because his first shot really has to count. Don't bother to roll dice for the shot; just describe the impact of the bullet hitting the doctor's head. Death is instantaneous and very, very messy; the characters cannot save Dr. Zeus, no matter what extraordinary measures they try.

Of the ten pieces of information listed above, the doctor should disclose at least five before getting killed. If the characters have had a hard time gathering information up to this point in the adventure, the gamemaster may wish to let Dr. Zeus explain a bit more before offing him. Likewise, if the characters have found out everything up to this point, the gamemaster should feel free to kill the doc at any time. Ideally, he should wait until Dr. Zeus has told the characters the location of the storage facility, but they still have a chance to learn this important fact from Xavier or by searching Astrotech Industries' computer system.

After putting a bullet into Dr. Zeus's head, the sniper will take a few shots at the characters. The sniper will only spend 2 Combat Rounds shooting at them, however, preferring to get away clean rather than risk the characters catching him. In each of the 2 rounds, the sniper will shoot twice at a single character. If he hits the character with the first shot, he will fire the second shot at a different target; he doesn't have much time, and wants to inca-

pacitate as many of the characters as possible. Make tests for these shots as normal. The sniper is 300 yards away, technically long range; however, his rifle's imaging scope reduces the distance to medium range for purposes of making tests.

After the doctor has been shot, the characters should leave the area quickly before Lone Star arrives. Whether they take the doctor with them is up to the characters, but removing evidence from a crime scene (including a dead body) is a criminal offense. The characters would know this, so remind the players of this fact if they consider schlepping the body with them.

Attempting to catch the assassin is pointless, as he will be long gone by the time the characters reach his location. The first challenge is locating the sniper's position, which requires at least 2 successes on a Perception (9) Test. If the characters locate the sniper, they can only track him effectively if one of the characters is a magician and enters astral space. This tactic, while workable, has one major drawback. Eldritch, a combat mage working with the clean-up crew, is guarding the sniper in astral space and will gladly engage in astral combat with any player-character magician who comes looking for trouble. Eldritch's statistics appear in **Cast of Shadows,** p. 72.

The characters may try to locate and search Dr. Zeus's home in hopes of finding more information. This is a dead end, however. The clean-up crew has already searched the place thoroughly, trashing it in the process.

From here, the characters should investigate Xavier and his company (**Mr. Xavier, I Presume?,** p. 64), or head to the storage facility in Kansas (**Tales of Hoffman,** p. 67). Either option is viable, but before they arrive at either destination, they should receive an unpleasant visit from some unidentified men in black. Go to **Excuse Me, Sir?**

Sniper (1)

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	Armor
4	4 (5)	4 (5)	4	3	3	2.3	4 (6)	5/3

Initiative: 6 + 2D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 4/4
Skills: Etiquette (Political) 3, Firearms 5, Unarmed Combat 4
Cyberware: Datajack, Muscle Replacement 1, Smartlink, Wired Reflexes 1
Gear: Armor Jacket (5/3), Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M, 1 spare clip, Smartlink], Ranger Arms SM-3 [Sniper Rifle, 6 (mag.), SA, 14S, 1 spare mag., Silencer, Gas Vent 2, Imaging Scope 3]

DEBUGGING

The biggest risk in this encounter is that the sniper will kill one or more of the characters. The gamemaster should fudge as necessary to keep the characters alive; wounding one or two of them should make clear enough the danger they're facing. The characters can get most of Dr. Zeus's information from Lieutenant Colonel Yavin (**Lieutenant Colonel Yavin,** p. 60) or by investigating and/or meeting with Xavier (**Mr. Xavier, I Presume?**).

EXCUSE ME, SIR?

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

That black van is behind you again. It's been there all the while you've been driving through the streets of Houston. Of course, there are lots of black vans on the streets. It's probably not the same van, following you. Just your imagination working overtime. Sure.

As you turn onto a quiet side street, the van accelerates to close the distance between you. Then another van appears from behind the first. It careens around your car and skids to a stop in front of you, blocking your path. Behind you the other van cuts off any chance to retreat. You're boxed in.

Before you can react, the doors of the two vans slide open. Six large men, dressed in black suits and wearing mirrored sunglasses, step out of each van and surround your car. One of them walks up and knocks on the driver's window. "Step out of the car, please."

HOOKS

The heat finally catches up to the characters in this encounter. Though they may want to avoid this confrontation, it happens too fast for them to react. This scene should feel like a bolt of lightning that the characters belatedly realize could have struck at any time.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The gamemaster determines the specific time and place of this encounter, based on the flow of the adventure up to this point. The encounter can take place before or after the characters meet with either Lieutenant Colonel Yavin or Dr. Zeus, or after they meet with or check out Xavier. This encounter is a blunt instrument; it is intended to let the characters know that certain branches of the UCAS government want them to cease digging into things best left alone.

If the players insist that there must be some way to escape from the blockade, or if the gamemaster simply prefers to do so, he can run the encounter using the Vehicle Combat rules (p. 105, **SRII**). In this case, fudge all rolls made for the Men in Black as needed to allow them to box in the characters' car.

The agents in the vans are not part of the clean-up crew, but both groups report to the same boss—an unnamed official in Veil. The Men in Black are the "good cops," so to speak; they've been sent to stop the characters' investigations by intimidating rather than killing them. They will not start a fight with the characters; that's not their job. They are perfectly willing to defend themselves, however, with deadly force if necessary.

The agents will continually ask the characters to step out of their vehicle until the characters comply. If the characters insist on staying in the car, the agents will fire very carefully at the windows to break them without hitting any of the characters inside. They will then open the doors and drag the characters out of the car. The agents will shove the characters against the vehicle in the classic search position, hands on the roof of the car and legs spread wide. They will confiscate any weapons they find, and will take the added precaution of removing the clips and any rounds in the

weapons' chambers. A pair of agents will thoroughly search the vehicle for any hard evidence, such as data chips, printouts of the photos, and so on. The agents will confiscate any such evidence no matter how loudly the characters object.

If any of the characters ask the Men In Black why they are being searched, one of the men will hit that character with a kidney punch—nothing debilitating, but the character will immediately understand that he should shut up. The Man in Black who first approached the car will answer, "National Security." The characters cannot get any more out of any of the Men in Black until the agents have finished searching the characters and the car. At that point, the first agent says, "Get back into your car. You will be escorted back to the AresSpace facility. You will cease any and all activity related to your current investigations, or else face the consequences." Throughout the encounter, the agents will answer no questions from the characters.

If the characters cooperate with the Men in Black, they lose only their weapons and possibly some evidence. They've gotten most of their information from conversations up to this point, so there is nothing for the government agents to confiscate. If they obtain files as part of their preliminary legwork (**Investigations,** p. 56), the gamemaster may choose to assume the team made backup copies of the files and put them in a safe place. If they have copies with them, the UCAS agents take the copies.

If the characters try to attack the Men in Black during the search, the agents will respond in kind. They will not hesitate to kill the characters; the characters should have known better than to threaten UCAS government muscle. If attacking characters surrender or are subdued, the agents will take them to a nondescript building in a Barrens-like part of the Houston sprawl. The Men in Black will keep them there for five days, during which time the clean-up crew will eliminate all witnesses to and evidence of Operation Discovery, including Yavin, Dr. Zeus (assuming the sniper hasn't already killed him), Xavier and the storage facility in Kansas. The characters will have failed; go to **Picking Up the Pieces,** p. 70.

If the characters defeat the agents, they are advised to leave quickly. Lone Star or the clean-up crew will arrive shortly, and the characters won't much care to face either of them.

Men in Black (12)

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	Armor
4	4	4	4	3	3	2.1	4 (6)	3/2

Initiative: 8 + 3D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 4/4
Skills: Car 6, Etiquette (Political) 3, Firearms 5, Unarmed Combat 4
Cyberware: Chipjack, Datajack w/ 50 Mp of Memory, Wired Reflexes 2
Gear: Armored Clothing (3/0), Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M, 1 spare clip, Smartlink], Bug Scanner 4, Data Reader, Skillsofts (Computer 5, Electronics 5), Smartgoggle sunglasses

Where the characters go from here is up to them. The UCAS agents escort them back to AresSpace headquarters; if they decide to follow the agents' orders, they can present what evidence they've obtained to Steele and hope it's enough to satisfy their superior. Go to **Picking Up the Pieces,** p. 70.

If they choose to continue their investigation, the next encounter depends on the next step they take. If they wish to investigate Xavier, go to **Mr. Xavier, I Presume?** If they want to check out the storage facility, go to **Tales of Hoffman,** p. 67.

DEBUGGING

If the characters are foolish enough to attack government muscleboys, this encounter may end the adventure with the characters' deaths. If the gamemaster doesn't want to punish his players by letting their characters face the likeliest consequences of such an action, he can allow the characters to escape through some stroke of dumb luck or fudge the agents' dice rolls to allow the characters to survive combat relatively unscathed.

MR. XAVIER, I PRESUME?

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Karl Xavier ... yet another name straight out of a spy movie or a conspiracy-buff trid show. This name turned up more than once in your search for information about the NASA mission of 2001, Project Cydonia, and the mysterious Operation Discovery. From what Yavin and Zeus told you, Xavier may have more to do with this whole story than anyone else. You certainly hope so ... a few concrete answers might help you figure out the best way to stay alive.

HOOKS

Just when the characters may think they've learned it all, they find yet another layer of the onion. In this encounter, they may get to see something that only a handful of people have laid eyes on: footage of the surface of Mars that shows astronauts walking alongside immense pyramids and the skeleton of a massive alien creature. But this wonder carries a price: many people have died, one quite recently and brutally, because someone wants to keep the truth secret. Is Xavier that someone? Or is he just another pawn in this deadly game? Let the players wonder. Portray Xavier as a man of mystery. At least at first, the player characters shouldn't be able to tell if he's on their side, allied with the Men in Black or loyal only to himself. The characters should never feel certain of this man or his motives.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Tell It To Them Straight assumes that the characters investigate Xavier after meeting with both Lieutenant Colonel Yavin and Dr. Zeus. If not, the gamemaster should modify the text accordingly.

Xavier has connections in the UCAS Department of Defense that go back to the days before the dissolution of the old U.S. As a young man he worked for NASA, and also served as a covert operative for Veil. His role at that time largely involved keeping secrets. He was tangentially involved in Operation Discovery, and after its disastrous failure stayed on at NASA to ensure that the mission remained unknown. He transferred to AresSpace when

Ares Macrotechnology bought out NASA, where he continued to work covertly for Veil.

When AresSpace launched Project Cydonia, Xavier and other Veil agents working with him tampered with the Cydonia probe's data and planted false evidence pointing to MUFON as the culprit. Xavier turned the original, intact data over to his superiors in Veil, but first made a copy for himself. Shortly after the Cydonia fiasco, Xavier left AresSpace and with some outside funding formed Astrotech Industries. This aerospace company has since grown to compete, albeit on a small scale, with AresSpace. Most of Astrotech's business comes from UCAS government contracts for the construction, launching and maintenance of satellites. Xavier has managed to wangle a good bit of this business by hinting at the existence of his copy of the Cydonia data, which is buried deep within Astrotech Industries' computer system.

The characters can investigate Xavier through standard legwork, by breaking into Astrotech's system via the Matrix, or by meeting with Xavier face to face. If the characters use their contacts to check out Xavier or Astrotech Industries, see **Legwork,** p. 71.

DECKING ASTROTECH INDUSTRIES

If the AresSpace team includes a decker, either a player character or an NPC, they may attempt to deck into the Astrotech Industries system in search of information about Xavier. This system uses Tiered Access and consists of three hosts (see p. 15, **Virtual Realities 2.0**). Hosts A and B handle most of the company's needs; Host C contains the sensitive files, including Xavier's copy of the original Cydonia data.

Hosts A and B are standard corporate systems. Host A is Green-5/8/10/8/10/10. Host B, a little tougher to crack, is Orange-10/13/13/14/13/15. These two hosts use Security Sheafs similar to the Ares Macrotechnology sheafs shown on p. 150, **Virtual Realities 2.0.** The System Rating and Security Sheaf for Host C is given below. Host C is very nasty, well beyond the level of security common to corporations the size of Astrotech Industries; Xavier is taking no chances with his precious copy of the data from Project Cydonia.

Astrotech Industries Host C: Red-9/14/16/13/14/14
Paydata: 10
Data Density: 2D6 x 5

The sculpture of this host is straight out of a spy film. IC looks like secret agents and data files appear as coded messages. A group of hotshot deckers are also on hand to protect this host from intruders. These deckers are the equivalent of Superior opponents (see p. 84, **SRComp** and **Government Deckers,** p. 155, **Virtual Realities 2.0**).

Security Sheaf

Trigger Step	Event
3	Trace-10
5	Probe-8
7	Trap Probe-8 (Killer-9)
9	Passive Alert
11	Acid-10 (Armor, Shifting)
13	Expert Blaster-12/Defense +1
15	Active Alert: Astrotech Industries decker will appear in 2 turns
17	Expert Construct/Offense +2 (Armor), Blaster-7, Acid-5, Tar Baby-4
19	Black IC-8 (Armor)(lethal)
21	Shutdown

What's In Here?

Host C contains two files of particular interest to the characters. One, a 30 Mp file, contains a complete summary of Operation Discovery, including the location of the storage facility in Kansas. The other, a 200 Mp file, contains the original data from Project Cydonia. In addition to these, the characters can also find several other files that AresSpace might find valuable ... or that will fetch a good price on the shadow market. If the decker is a hired gun, the characters may look the other way if and when the decker swipes a file or two, by way of "extra compensation" for doing a dangerous job. Alternatively, if the characters fear that they may have no jobs at AresSpace to go back to when this assignment is over, they may decide to swipe some files themselves as a form of insurance. They can offer to trade the files for job security, or bolt to the shadows and use the proceeds from the files to set themselves up in the shadowrunning biz.

MEETING MR. XAVIER

If the characters decide to meet with Xavier in person, they'll need to make arrangements with his secretary. The characters will find this easier if they are mostly up-front and honest about who they are and why they want to meet Mr. X. If they use false names or IDs, Xavier will refuse to meet with them. Xavier has heard through the grapevine that AresSpace has a team of agents looking into the photos from Dunkelzahn's will. He will surmise (correctly) that the characters are most likely this team, and check their identities closely before agreeing to meet them.

Xavier doesn't know how much the characters have learned; specifically, he has no idea that they know about Operation Discovery. If they mention Operation Discovery when arranging to meet Xavier, he will be impressed at their investigative skills, and will reluctantly agree to see them, primarily in order to convince the team that they're being misled. During the meeting, Xavier will attempt to cast doubt on whatever evidence the characters have obtained thus far concerning Operation Discovery. Ultimately, the characters' best strategy is to keep their knowledge of Operation Discovery and Project Cydonia hidden until they see Xavier in person. That way they may catch him off guard and get him to talk.

Xavier will invite the characters to the Astrotech Industries offices for the meeting. When they first enter the building, they must walk through a metal detector and submit to a search by security officers. The officers will confiscate any weapons larger than light pistols, and return them when the characters are leaving the building. Xavier's administrative assistant will meet the characters and escort them to a conference room on the twenty-third floor. She will answer no questions about Xavier; if asked about Astrotech Industries, she replies with typical corporate rhetoric.

Two security guards in armored business suits stand outside the conference room. They carry Ares Predators. For their statistics (should you need them), use the Corporate Security Guard archetype (p. 205, **SRII**), but give them Armored Clothing (3/1) and Ares Predators. The guards have a Professional/Threat Rating of 2/2.

Xavier will join the characters a few minutes after they enter the conference room. He is in excellent health for a man of his 70 years. He has thick gray hair and wears thin-rimmed glasses and a dark business suit. A Fichetti Security 500 light pistol sits in a concealed holster under his suit jacket. As he walks in, he introduces himself and asks how he can help the characters.

If the characters threaten Xavier or pull weapons, he summons a team of eight security guards to escort the characters from the building. These guards will not start a fight, but will defend themselves if attacked. They have the same statistics and gear as the guards by the door. If the characters insist on fighting, the guards will summon six reinforcements, all of whom carry HK227-S assault rifles and wear Armored Jackets (5/3).

Karl Xavier

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	Armor
3	2	2	5	5	5	4.6	3	3/1

Initiative: 3 + 1D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 4/4
Skills: Computer 5, Electronics 4, Firearms 3, Interrogation 5, Leadership 4, Military Theory 3, Negotiation 4, Psychology 3
Cyberware: Chipjack, Datajack w/100 Mp of memory
Gear: Armored Clothing (3/1), Fichetti Security 500 [Light Pistol, 12 (clip), SA, 6L]

What Xavier Knows

The characters can learn a lot from Xavier in this encounter, as he was privy to most of the secrets surrounding Operation Discovery and Project Cydonia. Whether Xavier will actually tell the characters anything depends on how they deal with him. If they are pushy or arrogant, he avoids answering questions directly; instead he gives vague responses such as, "I don't recall that," or "I'm sorry, I don't know what you're talking about." If they treat him in a civil fashion, he will answer most questions put to him, except if it might implicate him in wrongdoing.

Xavier knows next to nothing about the NASA Probe mission except that much of its data was kept secret, including the photos that appeared in Dunkelzahn's will. Xavier knows all about Operation Discovery, including everything the characters might have learned from their initial legwork, from Lieutenant Colonel Yavin and from Dr. Zeus. Most importantly, Xavier knows the location of the storage facility in Kansas where the evidence is kept. He also knows virtually everything about Project Cydonia, including who sabotaged the data, because he was one of the guilty parties.

Xavier will talk about Operation Discovery, as his role in that disastrous mission was insignificant and he did nothing wrong. He will not, however, bring up Operation Discovery himself or offer any information about it that is not in response to a direct question. He will try to avoid questions about his role in Project Cydonia, especially anything that hints at his involvement in sabotage. If the characters ask him about the project, he admits to working on it and then clams up. He will not discuss the sabotaged data unless the characters broach the subject. If asked directly about the data tampering, Xavier will awkwardly avoid answering.

Though he is aware of most of the characters' activities so far, he has not yet learned of Dr. Zeus's death or the characters' encounter with the Men in Black (**Excuse me, Sir?,** p. 63). If the characters tell Xavier of these two incidents, they may detect a hint of concern on his face. If they try to convince Xavier that he's next on the Veil clean-up crew's hit list, they may get more information out of him; if they frighten him enough, he may even confess to tampering with the Project Cydonia data. To accomplish this feat, however, a character must achieve least 2 net successes on an opposed Charisma, Interrogation or Negotiation Test

against Xavier's Willpower. If the test succeeds, Xavier comes clean about his involvement in the data tampering and tells the characters that a copy of the original data exists in the storage facility in Kansas. If the characters achieve 4 or more successes on the opposed test, Xavier will offer them his own copy of the original data, which is in his computer system. If the characters meet Xavier before meeting Dr. Zeus or running into the Men in Black, Xavier will not offer them a copy of the data.

The gamemaster decides whether or not the clean-up crew comes after Xavier. Of course, if the characters turn over Project Cydonia's original data to Steele at AresSpace, Xavier might just receive a not-so-friendly visit from Ares' corporate security division.

The next move is up to the characters. If they haven't met with Lieutenant Colonel Yavin or Dr. Zeus yet, go to **Lieutenant Colonel Yavin** (p. 60) or **Dr. Zeus** (p. 61), as appropriate. If the characters want to check out the storage facility in Kansas, go to **Tales of Hoffman.** If the characters think they've discovered everything they can and want to end their investigation, go to **Picking Up the Pieces,** p. 70.

DEBUGGING

If the characters foolishly pick a fight with the Astrotech Industries security guards, they may well get themselves killed just as they are closing in on the truth they've been sent to find. The gamemaster can either let it happen (that'll teach the players not to brawl with a large, well-armed security force for no good reason!) or fudge dice rolls to let them survive. They will learn absolutely nothing, which may be enough of a price to pay for stupidity. They will also learn next to nothing if they get too pushy with Xavier, and will end up no further along than when they entered the building. If this occurs, the Draco Foundation can step in with the last few tidbits of vital information. The characters might receive an anonymous telecom call, or a mysterious package containing an optical chip with the needed information on it. Use this tactic only as a last resort; again, the players will have more fun if their characters find all the missing pieces to this puzzle on their own. The characters may also re-question any of the main players in this adventure, except Dr. Zeus, to learn necessary information.

TALES OF HOFFMAN

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

First a retired astronaut, then a paranoid scientist who ended up messily dead at an assassin's hand, then a spy turned corporate big-wig who helped pull off one of the greatest scams of all time—this has been quite the assignment. Now you're taking a trip to the boondocks of Kansas of all places, to Hoffman Farm, where the old U.S. government supposedly squirreled away all kinds of relics from the disastrous Operation Discovery. This job just keeps getting weirder and weirder.

Your flight to Wichita went just fine, and the company car was waiting for you. Just a two-hour drive and you'll be there ... at ground zero of a grand cover-up. Just what—or who—might you find when you get there?

HOOKS

As the characters first enter the abandoned missile silo, they should feel as if they've struck gold. The storage facility holds proof of the truth they've been seeking ... if they can get to it in time. A few minutes after they arrive, the Veil clean-up crew turns up and attacks the characters. Exaggerate the severity of the situation; unless the characters act fast and have a whole lot of luck, their careers and lives are facing an abrupt end.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Tell It To Them Straight assumes the characters have flown to Wichita and driven from there to the secret storage facility. If they use some other mode of transportation, the gamemaster should adjust the text accordingly.

The storage facility is an abandoned missile silo beneath Hoffman Farm, roughly one hundred kilometers directly west of Wichita, in the little town of Haggard, Kansas. Transportation from Houston to Wichita is easily arranged, as is a company car waiting for them at the Wichita airport. The farm is located about two hours from Wichita on Route 23, one mile south of Route 56. The drive will be uneventful and the farm is the only property along that stretch of Route 23. The U.S. government purchased the farm from the Hoffman family in the late 1970s, and the place has been abandoned ever since.

A long driveway leads from the highway up to a large, ramshackle farmhouse. Across from the farmhouse are several barns; old, rusted farm equipment sits idle in an overgrown field. On the far side of one of the barns is the storm cellar, the entrance to the storage facility under the nearby missile silo.

THE STORAGE FACILITY

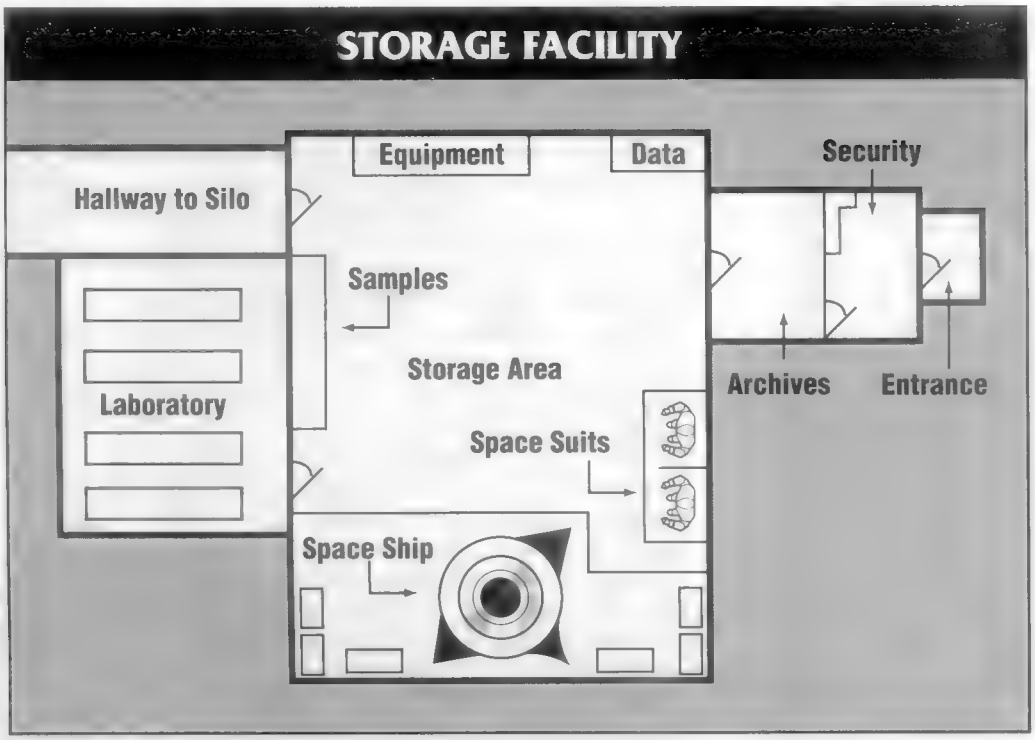
The storage facility was a nuclear missile silo in the late twentieth century, but was dismantled and abandoned early in the twenty-first. Like many such sites around the country, it made a perfect place to store government secrets.

Security Measures

The storm-cellar entrance is protected by a maglock and alarm system set to go off if the doors are forced. The silo is also blanketed with motion and heat sensors. Each of the storage bins and the computer terminal are rigged with an alarm.

The temperature in the silo is a cool 72 degrees, and the heat sensors will detect even the slightest change (say, the body heat of several AresSpace agents). The motion sensors can detect any movement faster than a few inches a minute; to move without triggering them requires a successful Quickness (5) Test for every 2 feet a character wishes to move. If any of these tests fails, the character trips the sensors and sets off the alarm.

All of the sensors and alarms can be switched off from a console located in the Security Room (see **Layout** and map, p. 68). Operating the console requires Computer Skill. Switching off an alarm or the motion and heat sensors requires a successful Computer (5) Test; switching off a triggered alarm requires a successful Computer (8) Test. The console can also be operated with the Electronics Skill, but increase the target numbers given above by +2.



Layout

1. Entrance: The storm cellar doors are padlocked shut; the lock looks noticeably newer than the hinges and latches on the doors. The characters should be able to pry it open with little trouble. Beyond the doors, cement steps lead down to a metal door, which is locked with a Rating 5 maglock. Beyond this door is a long flight of metal stairs that leads to a vault-like door protected by a Rating 7 maglock.

The characters can defeat these maglocks by using a maglock passkey or achieving at least 1 success on an Electronics Test against a target number equal to the maglock's rating. One success opens the door, but also triggers a silent alarm within the Pentagon. Another silent alarm alerts the clean-up crew, who are en route to the farm even as the characters enter the silo. Achieving 2 or more successes on the Electronics Test opens the door without triggering the silent alarms.

The silo is located nearly 100 feet below the surface. The surrounding earth offers excellent protection against astral intrusion, and both doors have Force 6 wards (a recent addition to the security measures).

2. Security Room: The vault door leads into this room, which contains a small desk next to a security console and a single office chair. The walls of this room, and of the entire silo, are concrete. Along the right-hand wall is a circuit-breaker box with a large switch on the left side. This switch controls the main power for the lights in the silo. When flipped on, lights mounted along both walls of the silo turn on in sequence, starting in the security room and moving down the hall. These lights are single bulbs, each covered with a metal cage. At the far end of the Security Room is a steel door that leads to the archives room.

The security console is powered from a separate source, and is on when the characters enter. A few dim lights glowing on it represent the various alarms that are currently activated. If one of the silent alarms has been triggered, a small light at the top of the console will be blinking when the characters walk in. The room is dark when the characters enter, and so the characters cannot help but notice the blinking light. If a character with the Computer or Electronics skill examines the console and makes a successful test against a Target Number 5, the characters can tell that the blinking light indicates an alarm.

3. Archives: This small room contains two desks, a personal computer, two office chairs and several filing cabinets. Records of the storage facility's contents are kept in this room. The filing cabinets contain only a few file folders with hard copies of some of the data obtained from the Martian stone and bone samples. On the far side of the room is a steel door that leads to the main storage area.

The computer has built-in CD-ROM and data-tape drives, as well as an optical chipjack. It has also been outfitted for datajack interface, so any character with a datajack can operate the system without using the keyboard. The computer system is isolated; it has no connections to the Matrix. The computer is off when the characters enter the silo, but it goes on along with the lights. Searching the computer for useful files or information requires a successful Computer (4) Test. The computer database includes an inventory of the silo's contents; if searched, this database reveals that the silo's most recent addition is a data chip labeled "Cydonia" and dated 8 December 2042.

4. Storage Area: The storage area contains several bins, each of which holds some item, sample, or piece of data obtained from Operation Discovery. Two doors lead out of this room, one to the laboratory and the other to a long hallway with empty rooms branching off of it.

Each storage bin is sealed, most with Plexiglas doors, and locked with an electronic keypad lock. Opening a lock requires an Electronics (5) Test. A single success opens the door, but triggers an alarm. Two or more successes opens the door without triggering the alarm.

Alongside the main storage area is another room with five-inch-thick Plexiglas walls. This room contains the space capsule in which Yavin and the other two Discovery astronauts returned to earth. A single door in the Plexiglas is locked with an electronic keypad lock. Along the shorter two walls of this rectangular chamber are pairs of lab tables and three stools. Though the ship is too large to remove without heavy equipment, the characters can take a few small pieces away with them if they choose.

5. Laboratory: Much of the research on the samples brought back from Mars was conducted in this lab. Now the room is empty except for a few lab tables and bits of broken and discarded glassware and lab equipment. None of the equipment is salvageable.

6. Hallway to Silo: This hallway eventually ends at the silo's launch bay. The hallway door is locked with a Rating 5 maglock. Searching all the empty rooms will take the characters five or six hours; there are hundreds of yards of corridors and rooms in this installation. They can find an exit at the far end of the silo—a small ventilation shaft that leads to the surface two kilometers from Hoffman Farm.

Storage Bin Contents

The various storage bins contain the space suits worn by the Discovery astronauts, miscellaneous equipment, samples from the pyramids and the skeleton (shown in the NASA photos) and a vast collection of mission data, including video footage of the astronauts collecting the samples. Also stored here is the original, untouched data from Project Cydonia.

The space suits are standard NASA EVA (extra-vehicular activity) suits. Each of the three suits is stored in a separate bin. The suits are heavy and cumbersome to carry. Equipment and tools—sample vials, pick hammers, Geiger counters and an EVA pack—are kept in several small storage bins. With the exception of the EVA pack, the equipment is easily portable.

Racks of small sample vials in some of the bins contain stone chips from the pyramids and bone splinters from the skeleton. Other storage bins contain slightly larger samples of both, about 2 to 3 inches in diameter; a few larger pieces of stone; and one whole bone, about a meter and a half long, that looks like a femur (thigh bone). The characters can take these samples with them, except for the femur and the larger pieces of stone.

Data collected from studies of the samples are kept in a small bin just inside the storage area, by the door to the archive room. This bin contains fifteen CD-ROMs, twenty data-tapes and an optical-chip case with three chips in it. Each of these is labeled by content. If the characters search all the CD-ROMs, they can find one labeled "NASA Security/Sentry Probe: Original Data" that contains the footage taken by the NASA probes in 2001 (including the photos in Dunkelzahn's will). Another CD-ROM is labeled "Operation Discovery: Original Footage," and an optical chip is labeled "Project Cydonia: Original Data." The characters can use the computer in the archives room to look at any of these disks, tapes or chips. The Project Cydonia chip contains 200 minutes of digital footage from the surface of Mars. The footage clearly shows the pyramids and the skeleton, and also reveals the wreckage of the crippled Operation Discovery ship. The saboteurs (Xavier among them) created the Project Cydonia photo seen in Dunkelzahn's will by doctoring this image.

The characters may choose to simply take all the disks, tapes and chips rather than searching them on-site. Such an act is a federal crime, for which the characters will most certainly pay (eventually).

GENTLEMAN CALLERS

The Veil clean-up crew arrives while the characters are in the silo, 5 + 2D6 minutes after the characters show up. They have come to retrieve the data and destroy the silo's remaining contents; depending on whether or not the characters tripped a silent alarm, they may also know that the characters are inside. They will certainly know that someone has entered the silo if they see the characters' car, or any sign that the storm cellar doors or the padlock have been forced. Only if the characters managed to get inside without leaving obvious traces will their presence take the clean-up crew by surprise. Regardless of whether or not they expect the characters to be there, the clean-up crew will consider them just another loose end and try to eliminate them. The characters' best hope for survival lies in one small fact: the crew most likely knows that someone has broken into the silo, but doesn't know exactly who it will find.

The crew enters the silo using a standard two-by-two cover formation: two move ahead, two more cover the first pair, and so on. Silver, the crew's leader, has a passkey for the maglocks on the doors and knows all the codes for the other locks in the silo. Opening the doors with the passkeys or codes will light up the security console; if the characters are in the security room when the crew arrives, they may know that company is coming. Characters in the security room when the crew opens the first maglocked door can detect the opposition's entry with a successful Perception (4) Test.

When the crew enters the security room (assuming the characters do not confront them there), they will check the security console to determine which doors and security bins have been opened. They will also turn the lights on or off. Every crew member is equipped with low-light goggles, so any light level is fine with them. Switching the lights off (if they are on) or on (if they are off) will distract the characters temporarily, giving the crew an advantage.

The crew consists of Silver, Eldritch the combat mage, and a number of soldiers equal to the number of player characters. Statistics for the soldiers appear below. Statistics and descriptions for Silver and Eldritch appear in **Cast of Shadows,** p. 71. The crew will do its damnedest to make sure that none of the player characters leaves the silo alive. To destroy the silo, each member of the crew carries a kilogram of C4 plastique; Silver carries the detonators. The crew will try to deal with the characters before planting the explosives. If the characters flee into the silo, the soldiers will track them while Silver plants the explosives in the storage area. Placing the explosives takes 10 minutes. If the characters evade the crew until that time elapses, the soldiers will pull back and the explosives will be set to detonate 5 minutes later. On their way out the crew will smash the maglock on the vault door to the security room, effectively jamming the door shut. Opening this door requires a successful Strength (9) Test. Any characters caught in the storage area, archive room, security room or laboratory will be killed in the explosion. To be safe, they must make it all the way through the security room and past the vault door, or into the hallway that leads to the launch bay. The explosion will drop several tons of earth and rock down into the storage area, effectively cutting off the characters' escape route if they are in the long hallway. In this case, they must search the silo for another way out. Eventually the characters will find the ventilation shaft and can make their way out. From there they must find their own way back to Houston, as the clean-up crew will have found their car and disposed of it.

Clean-Up Crew (1 for each character)

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	Armor
4 (5)	4	4	4	3	3	2.8	4 (6)	6/4

Initiative: 6 + 2D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 4/4
Skills: Car 6, Etiquette (Political) 2, Firearms 5, Unarmed Combat 4
Cyberware: Datajack, Dermal Plating 1, Smartlink, Wired Reflexes 1
Gear: Partial Heavy Armor (6/4), Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M, 1 spare clip, Smartlink], Ares Alpha Combat Gun [Assault Rifle, 42 (clip), SA/BF/FA, 8M, 2 spare clips, Smartlink], Franchi SPAS-22 [Shotgun, 10 (mag.), SA/BF, 10S, 2 spare clips, Smartlink], C4 plastique [1 kilo], Low-Light Goggles, Survival Knife [6L Damage]
Note: Half the soldiers carry the Ares Alpha Combat Gun; the other half carry the Franchi SPAS-22.

If the characters survive this encounter, they have most likely found sufficient proof of the truth behind the NASA mission and Project Cydonia to satisfy their employer. From this point, the characters should return to Houston and AresSpace to share their findings with Steele. Go to **Picking Up the Pieces.**

DEBUGGING

The biggest challenge in this encounter is the very good chance that the characters will be killed by the clean-up crew. Don't fudge this combat. Let the chips fall as they may. The characters have dug themselves into a very deep hole in this adventure, and now it's time to face the music. They should feel threatened, and for good reason. The clean-up crew are skilled, well-equipped professionals trained to kill people like the characters.

Make sure, however, to give the characters a chance to win or at least escape from this battle. If the characters are careful and clever, they can win or live to fight another day. Make the characters feel they've earned any victory they manage to pull off.

PICKING UP THE PIECES

Once the characters have dug up all the information they think they can find, they should head back to AresSpace HQ in Houston to report to Steele. Roleplay this meeting, allowing the characters to tell their boss the story. This gives the gamemaster a chance to hear the characters' interpretation of what they've learned. If the characters have any hard evidence, such as the original Project Cydonia data or anything else from the storage facility, they should turn it over as well.

Though Steele will be interested in the truth about the 2001 NASA mission and Operation Discovery, his greatest concern is the sabotage of Project Cydonia. He will be extremely eager to see the original footage and hear everything about Xavier's role in the evidence-tampering.

After the characters finish their debriefing, Steele will thank them for their efforts and dismiss them. If they ask what he intends to do with the information, he'll simply tell them that it's none of their concern. If the team insists that Steele should take some sort of action, he will forcefully remind them that they are employees bound by a Non-Disclosure and Confidentiality contract that forbids them to discuss the matter with anyone. Period.

AresSpace will do nothing with the information ... publicly. The corporation will release nothing to the press or other media. After reporting the characters' findings to his superiors, Steele is ordered to keep the whole affair quiet. Neither he nor anyone else at AresSpace contacts the Draco Foundation to claim the bequest in Dunkelzahn's will, as claiming the 1 percent interest in Ares Macrotechnology requires public exposure of the truth. The megacorp chooses not to spill the beans for one simple reason: profits. Damien Knight's contacts within the UCAS government are more important to Ares Macrotechnology's bottom line than 1 percent of Ares stock, and Knight knows better than to ruffle those feathers.

In the shadows, however, a little information leaks out. Word spreads of an investigation and massive cover-up having to do with the Mars photos from Dunkelzahn's will. The details are vague and often contradictory, but all the rumors claim that someone found out the truth and that AresSpace and the UCAS are keeping that truth to themselves.

In addition, if the characters check, they learn that Lieutenant Colonel Yavin and Karl Xavier have both turned up dead. Yavin suffered a massive coronary; Xavier died in a car crash under somewhat mysterious circumstances. In fact, Xavier's death is Steele's revenge. Steele paid a price for Project Cydonia long ago. Now he's made Xavier pay for it, too.

Are the characters safe, now that they've uncovered the truth about such a deep, dark government secret? As long as they keep quiet about it, they should have no trouble. If the characters keep copies of the data and attempt to expose the truth, they'll find themselves out of a job faster than they can blink—but that's only the beginning. They will also earn another visit from some Men in Black, or possibly Silver and his soldiers (assuming the clean-up crew survived the battle in the silo) or an Ares-sponsored shadow team.

If the characters die or are held by the Men in Black until Silver and his men have eliminated all traces of Operation Discovery and the Cydonia tampering, Steele and AresSpace never learn the truth. If still alive, the characters return to their jobs, and life goes on as if nothing happened. Veil no longer considers them a threat because they can't prove a scrap of what they claim to know. If they talk, the world will consider them just another bunch of tofu-for-brains conspiracy nuts.

So what's the real story with the pyramids and skeleton on Mars? Are they signs of intelligent life? And what about the Operation Discovery disaster? Is it coincidence that the ship malfunctioned just as the Awakening began on Earth ... or is there more to it? The answers to these questions are the gamemaster's to determine.

AWARDING KARMA

Award team Karma for the adventure as shown on p. 71. Award individual Karma according to the standard rules (p. 199, **SRII**).

Survival	1 point
Threat	3 points
Discovering the truth about Project Cydonia	1 point
Discovering the truth about Operation Discovery	1 point
Obtaining original Project Cydonia data	1 point

LEGWORK

If the characters question their contacts about Karl Xavier or Astrotech Industries, use the Legwork tables below to determine what they learn.

KARL XAVIER

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 6)

Any Government Agent, Government Official, Company Man, Mr. Johnson or Shadowland.

Successes	Results
0	"Karl Xavier? Never heard of him!"
1	"Karl Xavier—he's head honcho of some aerospace company in Houston."
2	"He runs Astrotech Industries. They're new—and they've been nudging out AresSpace lately, especially when it comes to government contracts."
3	"Xavier used to work for AresSpace. He worked for NASA years ago, and transferred during the Ares Macrotechnology buyout."
5+	"That guy's trouble. I hear he used to work for the Department of Defense, as a troubleshooter—you know, as in 'anybody who's trouble, he shoots 'em.'"

ASTROTECH INDUSTRIES

Appropriate Contacts (Target Number 5)

Any Mr. Johnson, Company Man, Government Official or Shadowland.

Successes	Results
0	"Astro-what? Ain't that the stuff they put in baseball stadiums?"
1	"Astrotech Industries is a small aerospace company in Houston."
3	"Aerospace outfit—headed up by a guy named Karl Xavier."
6+	"They've been stealin' more and more government contracts from AresSpace lately. Word is, Xavier's got connections in the UCAS Department of Defense. But you didn't hear that from me, didja?"

CAST OF SHADOWS

The following section describes important non-player characters in **Mission: Mars.**

JOHN SILVER

John Silver is the leader of the Veil clean-up crew, a team of agents assigned to eliminate evidence of Operation Discovery and the sabotage of Project Cydonia. He leads a team of crack UCAS soldiers plus his buddy Eldritch, a combat mage.

Silver is a tall, muscular human who wears his blond hair in a crew cut. He almost always dresses in a dark business suit. During the assault on the storage facility, he wears the armor listed under Gear, below. Silver will not negotiate with the characters under any circumstances, and has no reservations whatsoever about killing them all.

Attributes

Body: 4 (6)	Intelligence: 4 (7)
Quickness: 5 (6)	Willpower: 4
Strength: 5 (6)	Essence: .625
Charisma: 3	Reaction: 4 (8)

Initiative: 4 [8] +1D6 [4D6]
Body Index: 2.4
Task Pool: 2 (see Encephalon, p. 49, **Shadowtech**)
Threat/Professional Rating: 6/4

Skills

Armed Combat: 5	Gunnery: 4
Athletics: 4	Military Theory: 4
Car: 4	Rotorcraft: 4
Demolitions: 3	Stealth: 4
Etiquette (Political): 4	Unarmed Combat: 5
Firearms: 6	

Bioware

Cerebral Booster (2)
Synaptic Accelerator (2)

Cyberware (delta grade)

Chipjack	Muscle Replacement 1
Cybereyes (low-light, flare compensation)	Orientation System
	Reaction Enhancer (+2)
Datajack	Smartlink
Dermal Plating 2	Tactical Computer 1
Encephalon 2	Wired Reflexes 1
60 Mp Internal Memory	

Gear

Ares Alpha Combat Gun [Assault Rifle, 42 (clip), SA/BF/FA, 8M, 2 spare clips, Smartlink, Recoil Reduction 2]
Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M, 1 spare clip, Smartlink]
Armored Business Suit (3/1)
Demolition Kit

Gear continued on p. 72

DocWagon Contract (Platinum)
Headset Radio
Map chip w/map of storage facility
Medkit
4 Offensive Grenades [10S Damage]
Partial Heavy Armor (6/4)
Survival Knife [8L Damage]

JASON "ELDRITCH" MASON, COMBAT MAGE

Jason "Eldritch" Mason is a veteran of the UCAS special forces. After retiring from active military duty, he joined Veil as a special agent. A Grade 3 initiate, Eldritch is a tough opponent in combat.

He is tall and has a more slender build than Silver, with dark brown hair and eyes. He generally wears a business suit; in combat, he wears an armored jacket.

Attributes

Body: 3 (5)	Willpower: 5
Quickness: 4	Essence: 6
Strength: 2	Magic: 6 (10)
Charisma: 2	Reaction: 4
Intelligence: 5	

Initiative: 4 + 1D6
Magic Pool: 6
Threat/Professional Rating: 5/4

Skills

Armed Combat: 3	Magical Theory: 4
Athletics: 3	Military Theory: 4
Conjuring: 4	Sorcery: 6
Etiquette (Corporate): 4	Stealth: 3
Etiquette (Political): 4	Unarmed Combat: 4
Firearms: 3	

Spells

Combat

Hellblast: 4	Power Bolt: 5
Manaball: 4	Ram: 5
Mana Bolt: 5	

Detection

Clairaudience: 3	Detect Enemies: 3
Clairvoyance: 4	Personal Combat Sense: 5

Health

Heal: 4	Increase Reaction (+3): 2
Treat: 3	

Illusion

Confusion: 3

Manipulation

Armor: 3

Gear

Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, 15 (clip), SA, 9M, 1 spare clip, Smartlink]
Armor Jacket (5/3)
Armored Business Suit (3/1)
Combat Spell Focus (3)
DocWagon Contract (Gold)
Headset Radio
HK 227-S [SMG, 28 (clip), SA/BF, 7M, 1 spare clip, Smartlink]
Low-Light/Smartlink Goggles
Medkit
Power Focus (4)
Spell Lock (Armor/2 successes)
Survival Knife [8L Damage]

KING OF THE MOUNTAIN

FIRE FROM HEAVEN: A PROLOGUE

The door shuts with a click as a young woman is shoved into the room. Her blond crew-cut gives her the proto-military, masculine look favored by T-bird riggers. She turns to glare at her captors, but her defiance melts into sullenness under a pair of hard stares. She collapses on the hard-backed chair and stares at the concrete floor.

The small room is empty except for the single chair and the lens of a trideo camera reflected in the wide mirror on the wall. The woman's eyes are ringed with deep bruises, her face lined with fatigue and fear.

"Shall we start again?" one of the men asks, sounding falsely reasonable. He is dressed casually—in jeans and an Army sweatshirt—but his posture is stiff and tense. His blue eyes glitter like ice, giving the lie to his easy tone of voice.

"Am I allowed to say no?" The woman's outward calm is equally false.

"'Allowed' is a black-and-white term. You're *allowed* to say no as often as you want. But you may not like the consequences." His voice is flat, almost bland, with just a hint of a Boston accent.

"I know you'd enjoy another stay in the tank." The other man's dark eyes show little emotion. He looks bored.

"Yes." The first man smiles. "Let's start from the beginning. What's your name?"

"Elizabeth Moonstraw." She mumbles to her knees, just enough defiance left for this small gesture.

"Good. And where are you from, Beth? Can I call you Beth?"

Her eyes narrow—in pain or anger—as he says her name, but she answers in the same monotone, "Olympia, Salish-Shidhe."

"Really? So why were you piloting that T-bird from Trans-Polar Aleut through the Athabascan Council and then to Maine? Delivery?"

"Maybe."

"I see. To whom is this delivery going? Wait—let me guess." He looks her up and down slowly, his upper lip curled in a slight sneer. His gaze comes to rest on her datajack and then glides down her stocky body. "You don't look like the kind of girl who goes mountain-climbing for fun. Was this delivery to someone *living* in there? Maybe a whole bunch of someones?"

Her head comes up, and her eyes spark; for a moment it seems there's still life in her. "If you already know, why are you doing this? For kicks?"

The second man walks over and lays a hand on her shoulder—a familiar, almost brotherly gesture. "All we need from you are names, details, something to work with. Do they pay you well?"

"It's okay."

"More than okay, from the trouble you've given us. Come on, just a name."

"I can't tell you."

The first man circles to her right. He crouches. "I think you can. If not now ... well, the sensory-deprivation tank is waiting."

She cringes against the chair as if slapped. "I can't tell you! Please, I can't."

"And we were doing so well." The blue-eyed man sounds tired.

"No, really. I can't. They said it'd kill me!" She presses as close to the chair back as she can get, every muscle taut as wire. Only the second man's grip on her shoulder keeps her seated. She is shaking so hard that her skin seems to ripple.

The blue-eyed man kneels in front of her, trying to make her look at him. "They can't hurt you as long as we're taking care of you. If you tell us, you don't have to worry about them."

"You don't understand. He spoke to me. He'll kill me with fire from the heavens. God's Wrath will pour down and all those with the number of the dragon and the beast, those who betray the saints, will be struck down with the flaming sword." She speaks as if reciting a prayer; the strange words seem to calm her. "How can you hide from the City of God?"

For a fraction of a second, her expression remains blank and frozen. Then horror comes over her face. Her eyes widen until they seem about to rip her head apart from the inside.

Then white-hot flames flash like a nuclear explosion. Rippling layers of crimson blow the two men off their feet and the flesh off their bodies. She, in the center of the fire, is nowhere to be seen.

With a soft hissing sound, the screen turns to trideo snow.

INTRODUCTION

In **King of the Mountain**, the characters are Special Forces soldiers working for the UCAS government. Their assignment is to find out what's brewing inside a mountain fortress deep in the Trans-Polar Aleut. Sounds like a simple job—but in the Sixth World nothing is ever as simple as it seems, especially not for a team of government top guns.

The Computer Crash of 2029 destroyed immense amounts of vital information, including the location of Fort Ross: a half-finished nuclear/biowarfare shelter and weapons stockpile that the United States was building in the Alaskan mountain range. Fort Ross sat empty for several decades, until Colonel Lawrence Fenmore discovered a few surviving hard copy records of the place in 2051.

Fenmore, a long-time Humanis Policlub member and a fervent believer in apocalyptic Christianity, saw his find as a gift from Heaven. He had been passed over for promotion numerous times,

and had begun to turn his grudges into a plan for personal power, of which Fort Ross became the capstone.

Fenmore disagreed with the fear of magic exhibited by many of his fellow human supremacists. He saw magic as the weapon of the future; anyone who didn't know how to use it would suffer at the hands of those who did. Fenmore did not intend to be among the suffering. Allying himself with a cadre of discontented Army officers and an institutionalized mage who called himself the Archangel Michael, he began stockpiling magical resources at Fort Ross. After taking over and finishing the half-built hidden base, Fenmore recruited young, magically active girls from magophobic families. He described his Alaskan haven as a "boarding school," where the children would be trained to use their magical abilities "in a disciplined, appropriately Christian way." For the past five years, Fenmore and thirty-five other adults have run this sophisticated blend of kidnapping ring, military school and personality cult, collecting magically active girls from around the world and training them into a fanatical private army. Fenmore and his cronies ultimately intend to turn their weapon against Tir Tairngire or Aztlan, both of which they regard as particular enemies of Truth, Justice and Pure Humanity. Unfortunately for Fenmore, UCAS intelligence recently nabbed one of his supply shippers. When the captive triggered an anchored spell and killed herself and her interrogators, the UCAS sent a team of Army Rangers to bring back intelligence on the area around Mountain 9347, also known as Fort Ross. The Rangers never returned.

King of the Mountain sends the characters' Special Forces team to find out what is inside the mountain and whether or not it threatens UCAS security. A blizzard strikes while they are en route and forces them to drop early, losing their communications gear and most of their food in the storm. In the land of perpetual night, in a secret mountain fortress full of surreal illusions, angelic visions and deadly traps, the characters slowly slip over the line between reality and fantasy. It is up to you to decide exactly which side has more madmen ... .

GETTING STARTED

King of the Mountain is an advanced-level mission with plenty of magic and bullets, and therefore a high risk of death for the characters. This adventure is best suited for an experienced gamemaster and players.

Players and gamemasters who wish to enjoy **King of the Mountain** as a one-shot adventure can use the standard rules on page 115 of **The Shadowrun Companion: Beyond the Shadows** to create special ops characters. Top-notch shadowrunners may also participate in **King of the Mountain;** the military always wants deniability (and who's more easily deniable in the Sixth World than shadowrunners?). To run the adventure with shadowrunner player characters, see **Operation Backhand** (p. 76). If the characters are already special ops agents, then this mission is a matter of duty and honor whose ramifications they fully understand.

The team commander for this mission is a non-player character code-named "Heartbreaker." As written, Heartbreaker dies early in the mission, and his death leaves the characters to make most of the important decisions on their own. However, his speeches and actions at the beginning of the adventure help create a military atmosphere. His death also serves to shake up the characters, making them more cautious and showing them the scale on which they are playing. Heartbreaker's death will have a much bigger impact on the characters if he is introduced to the players before **King of the Mountain** begins. In an existing special ops campaign, he can be assigned to the team two or three missions prior to **King of the Mountain.** If the characters are shadowrunners, Heartbreaker can become their Mr. Johnson, UCAS government fixer, military liaison and even their friend. Heartbreaker's statistics appear in **Cast of Shadows,** p. 93.

The time of year is important to **King of the Mountain** only for descriptive purposes. As written, the adventure occurs between November and February. If you change the time of year to summer, make sure to describe several days of perpetual light rather than perpetual darkness.

King of the Mountain assumes that the characters are part of the UCAS military, but the gamemaster can make the player characters members of any military force that best fits his or her campaign. If the military they serve belongs to a nation that is part of the old United States, such as the California Free State or one of the Native American Nations, documentation on Fort Ross can be uncovered from a former U.S. military base. This approach also works well for special ops forces from the Caribbean League, as American bases once dotted many Caribbean islands. Characters serving other countries may need to find out about the activity at Fort Ross through alternate means—pirated transmissions, T-bird smugglers, or even from the family of one of the girls sent to Fenmore's "boarding school." Such a change does not alter the rest of the adventure.

PLAYING COMMANDOS

Somewhere in the Top Ten Secret Fantasies of every shadowrunner is getting the government's okay to do what they do—no fear of Lone Star, the best equipment money can buy and steady nuyen. But playing special-ops characters means more than doing what shadowrunners do best without repercussions. As a special-ops character, you are part of the military, where taking orders is the same as breathing. To be in the Special Forces means you love your country, you will defend your country against all comers, and you will die for your country without a second thought. Doubts do not cross your mind. In **King of the Mountain,** the player characters must break into a mountain fortress belonging to a paranoid religious fanatic—a feat that requires subtlety and mastery of all aspects of reconnaissance. If they blow it, they can either fight overwhelming odds and die nobly, or retreat into the wilderness and die ignobly. There is no honor in letting down their country.

Though at first deckers and riggers may seem unsuitable for this mission, keep in mind that as Special Forces agents they will have had excellent combat training, even though their primary responsibilities usually lie elsewhere. Also, Electronics and Computer Skills will be just as useful to this mission as fighting skills. If you are running this adventure with newly generated characters, all characters begin the game with the Registered Equipment Edge. No Flaws are needed to counter this Edge. All

characters also have SINs. Any other Flaws or Edges must be purchased separately. If the new characters are starting off with this mission, they should begin the game with a Karma Pool of 3 and 20 points of Good Karma to reflect the training missions they have previously undergone. If he or she wishes, the gamemaster can make the characters go through those training missions before this adventure; the characters' Karma would then reflect awards for those adventures. For adventure ideas, see p. 116 of **The Shadowrun Companion: Beyond the Shadows.**

If the players and gamemaster prefer to run this adventure using shadowrunners, they may do so. The fee would be high, perhaps 60,000 nuyen or more for each runner. Any necessary equipment that the runners cannot get on the street can come from the military through Heartbreaker, though the gamemaster need not give the runners access to special communications gear, special weather gear or any military grade equipment that they could not normally get. If the player characters need a lot of gear, their military employer may reduce the team's overall payment accordingly (what, you thought the UCAS military was made of money?).

For specific gear suggested for this mission, see **Operation Backhand.**

OPERATION BACKHAND

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

The air in the soundproof briefing room seems very still as General Daly shuts the door and makes his way toward you. He gives you an ironic smile, and you steel yourself for the worst. You'd just bet this isn't another training mission.

"Gentlemen and ladies," he begins, "at 02:33:15 Pacific Standard Time, 3 December, our defense satellites spotted this shape over the Trans-Polar Aleut Nation in the vicinity of the Alaska Range mountains. Our photography tech-heads pegged it as a low-flying Whiteout-class medium panzer hugging a tributary of the Kuskokwim River. Successive scans indicated it was moving at 320 klicks per hour. Now I don't have to tell you, that's awful slow for a T-bird. We believed it was coming in for a landing or a crash. But we saw no explosion.

"According to intel from ConsOps, there's quite the security setup around the foot of the southern mountain face, 6,200 meters above sea level. The tech boys ran an oblique scan and picked up anti-air defenses, including railgun-burst arrays. Clearly, someone or something is in there who does not want to be found. Sitting beneath the mountain would protect our mystery people to some extent from nuclear and LEO bombardment, provide a natural barrier against attack from astral space, and conceal the bulk of any operation from satellite surveillance.

"The T-bird landed in the Athabascan Council en route to Maine, where it picked up a shipment of materiel. We apprehended the rigger before she returned to her vehicle and interrogated her. The results were—" Daly stops and shakes his head. "Just watch."

He clicks a remote control and the wall lights up.

Read Fire from Heaven (p. 73) aloud; it depicts the vidchip scene that the characters watch. Continue by reading the following:

"The subject had what the wiz-heads call a hellblast spell anchored to her, set to blow at the words, "City of God." As you might imagine, not every punk rigger has a Whiteout-class panzer or a magical cortex bomb. Regrettably, our magical security was spread thin during the interrogation, so nobody caught the spell beforehand.

"Here's where your operation—code-named Backhand—comes in. Your primary objective is to determine if whoever or whatever is under that mountain is any threat to UCAS national security. You are to penetrate the interior of the mountain and find out what this "City of God" is. When you feel you have sufficient evidence, you will contact us. If we determine that what you have found is a threat, you will neutralize it.

"Officially, this operation does not exist. Once dropped where you need to be, you will have no biomonitor hookups, no cybernetics or equipment with serial numbers, and your SIN numbers will be eliminated for the duration. Magical links will be severed, ritual samples destroyed. If you take casualties, mission confidentiality is your highest priority.

"The rendezvous point is 63 degrees, 22.9660 minutes north latitude, and 148 degrees, 31.6158 minutes west longitude. If we don't hear from you within seven days, we will assume the operation failed.

"You've done this before, people. Gear in one, inspection in four, load 'em up in eight. Any questions?"

Read the following when the characters are ready to move out:

Though the winter wind is harsh against your cheeks, you can barely feel it through your Arctic-ready clothing. The C-260C waits on the runway, its roaring turboprops whipping away the steam coming off it. Huge and heavy, this C variant is packing shimmer gear—its silver-streaked gray hull is the color of ruthenium polymer coating.

You scramble up the ramp into the dark hull, and quickly snap yourself into restraints. None of this pinkie don't-need-my-seatbelt jetwash for you—a rigged C-260 takes off almost straight up, and you'd rather not kick off a tough mission with nasty bumps and bruises.

"Hey, boys!" the rigger yells over the comm. "Testing, testing. Welcome aboard. Y'all can call me Wonder Woman, 'cause you're on the Invisible Jet."

HOOKS

Load on the military atmosphere. Daly does everything by the book. Though more willing to answer questions than your average GI, he gets fed up with soldiers who seem reluctant to follow their orders.

This is not your everyday job. The characters are going to an unknown area, cut off from the rest of the world and not knowing what they are facing. The video is frightening—embellish details as necessary to make the explosion seem like it came out of nowhere until Daly explains it.

This day will be the characters' last day home before a mission that could easily cost them their lives. Play out good-byes

with friends and families; let them put their affairs in order in case they don't come back. Then it's three days in isolation as they check gear, hone their survival skills and pray to survive.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The player characters have been selected to perform a black operation, investigating a secret installation in Trans-Polar Aleut. After they've done anything they want prior to the briefing, read **Tell It to Them Straight.** Daly allows a short question-and-answer session after the briefing, but won't tell them much more than he has already. According to him, the UCAS military knows a secret installation exists inside an unnamed mountain in Alaska. They caught the T-bird rigger who'd been supplying the installation with food, but when they began to question her, she said the words "City of God" and triggered an anchored hellblast spell. Daly also knows, but won't reveal, that the military sent a team of Rangers out to investigate further. The Rangers never returned. Daly keeps this secret because he sees no reason for the player characters to know about the other team, as it will only make them afraid. In fact, more information exists about the installation than anyone is telling, but the characters will have no way of discovering this until the encounter **Go On Without Me,** p. 82.

The characters will be dropped as close to the base of the mountain as the Army rigger will risk bringing her plane, and far enough away not to set off anti-aircraft weapons or alarms. The characters have orders to sneak inside and find out whether this mysterious mountain base is a threat to the UCAS. The information they have so far implies that it is—serious magic, panzers and railguns suggest *something* worrisome—but for all the characters know, it may turn out to be run by allies of the UCAS and kept hidden from their branch of the government by another branch as a matter of course.

The characters must keep this mission completely under wraps. The UCAS does not want anyone to know they sent soldiers in, and so once the characters have seen enough, they must call Daly to get further orders.

If anyone asks what to do if they are unable to communicate with their superiors, Daly tells them to use their judgment. The characters are professionals, the eyes and arms of the UCAS, and their superiors will accept their decision. The post-briefing session is a good time to introduce Heartbreaker if you have not already done so. He is a rank or two higher than the player characters, and is in charge of the team for the duration of the mission. His statistics and description appear in **Cast of Shadows.** Play him as someone the characters will get along with and respect. They have to obey him because he is a senior officer, but it makes for a more pleasant game—and a more brutal shock when he dies—if everyone genuinely likes him.

THIS AIN'T NO PX ...

When the characters finish asking questions, or when they ask about gear, Daly sends them to get outfitted. Let the characters have almost anything that works for a stealth mission (no tanks, for example). They'll need it. However, make sure they aren't taking more than they can feasibly transport. The military cannot provide much magical equipment, as such esoteric gear is not their forte. They have plenty of fetishes, both expendable and reusable, but few foci. If the characters express no preferences, they will be equipped with the following:

- One or more maglock passkeys, the rating to be determined by the gamemaster.
- Light Military Armor (p. 54, **Fields of Fire**) with thermal dampening (reducing thermographics to normal vision), arctic camouflage, thermal insulation, a Battletac system, altimeters, GPS and an ultrasound/thermographic visor display. Alternatively, if the characters prefer a water insertion and want armor they can swim in, they will receive Level 3 Form-Fitting Body Armor incorporated into a thermal wet suit. Keep in mind that the visor display counts as an electronically-produced image when throwing spells.
- Colt Cobra TZ-112 submachine guns with sound suppressers, Smartlinks, 640 rounds of APDS ammunition and underbarrel grenade launchers with rangefinders; air-timed minigrenades; Colt Manhunters with Smartlinks and similar ammunition; and flash grenades.
- Survival kits with compact fuel, lighters, portable stoves, high-energy food, medkits, trauma patches, Redstone survival knives and a high-intensity cutting torch.
- Well-insulated tents and clothing, including arctic camouflage outfits to sleep in.
- Microtronics tool kits, a length of fiber-optic wire and a roll of duct tape.
- Snowshoes, hiking and mountain-climbing equipment and parachutes.
- A multi-shot missile or rocket launcher with anti-vehicle or high-explosive warheads, plus two kilos per person of C-12 and detonators (in case they have to neutralize something).
- Electrically powered Thundercloud Pinto all-terrain trike.

	Handling	Speed	B/A	Sig	APilot	Cost
Pinto	4/2	15/4	3/0	8	0	35,000¥

Seating: Single bucket seat + 2 rear **Storage:** 15 CF storage
Economy: 50 km per liter **Fuel:** IC/50 liters
Options: The optional enclosed canopy is especially popular in the Far North, as it offers complete protection equivalent to Armor 1 and allows the interior to be heated. Cost (includes heater system) 5,000¥.

Let the players have fun here—that's half the point of running a Special Forces campaign, right? When everyone is ready, read the second **Tell It to Them Straight** section.

LEGWORK

If the characters ask around the base about Operation Backhand, Moonstraw or the satellite recon, have them make a Etiquette (Military) (6) Test, then consult the Success Table on p. 78. Inquiries into the City of God will prove fruitless; it sounds like something out of the Book of Revelation and no one has any other frame of reference for it.

AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE

If the player characters are shadowrunners rather than military, the gamemaster must figure out how to get them involved. A military officer or two can appear at their doss (at, oh, 6 a.m. or

Successes	Result
0	"Trans-Polar Aleut, huh? Take it from me—don't lick your cyberhand while you're up there."
1	"Backhand? Sounds to me like the Joint Chiefs know it's hostile and they're gonna biff-slap whoever's in there."
2	"Daly code-named it, so I hear. They don't know what the frag they're dealing with. That's why it's called Backhand—that's how you test a wire to see if it's live, with the back of your hand."
3	"Look, I shouldn't tell you this, but you remember Sy Whittaker? I was friends with him. He got shipped off to parts unknown, black ops, and his team never made it back. It had something to do with that Moonstraw rigger and something damn secret. You ask me, the only thing Daly would keep from you is if someone went rogue and he's trying to cover it up. Freelancers wreck careers, you know."
4+	"Yeah, I know a few black ops and shadowrunners. Moonstraw had a couple of ties to hate groups, and I think those go all the way up. And that's all I'm gonna say about it."

so) and offer them big nuyen, cool toys and a whitewashed record in exchange for "doing your country a little favor." Or the military can resort to hardball tactics; they can kidnap the characters or hold loved ones for ransom. They may even help or hinder the player characters in the middle of a run. If the player characters helped out Dunkelzahn in **Super Tuesday** or **Shadows of the Underworld,** or helped "discover" the truth behind Yeats's assassination (**Shadows of the Underworld**), the same fixer or agent who set up any of those jobs can recommend them for this one. The military can do things far beyond the ken of the shadowrunners, no matter how hot a street rep they have or how many megacorps have put them on their Top Ten Troublemakers list. The military can always hammer the runners with Superior opponents (see p. 85, **SRComp**). Also, the military hires people to safeguard the security and safety of the country rather than to maximize corporate profits. They will therefore be more tenacious than the average megacorp at getting what they want or need.

Finally, remember that if the UCAS military is willing to grab some drek-eating slime off the street for a vital mission, they don't want any trails leading back to them; either that, or they figure no one will survive the job and they don't want to waste their own talent on a suicide run. The gamemaster can adjust the money suggested in the **Introduction** (p. 73) as he or she deems appropriate, but the fee should definitely be one of the highest the runners have ever been paid.

DEBUGGING

The characters cannot refuse this mission. This is their job, and unless they're intending to take to the shadows, they follow their orders. The players are playing some of the most highly skilled motherfraggers in the world, and this mission is just the sort of thing that gets the adrenaline going in people like that. Don't get too bogged down assigning gear—there's a lot of toys out there, and the characters should get into the action quickly.

BROKEN HALO

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

The C-260's been eating turbulence well into the night. It's 04:51:00 local time when Wonder Woman yells into the comm. "Okay, motherfraggers! We got a problem. Arctic storm dead ahead! Fraggin' 80 kph, cut by mountains, freezing rain! We either take this bird above it and drop you and your silk through a lightning storm, or we heave you early and you put those bikes to good use."

Heartbreaker, looking impossibly big in the armor, gives each of you the look. His voice comes in cold and clear over the Battletac communications system. "Well, are we gonna fall and turn into strawberry jam, or are we gonna take a little drive? Right! Stand 'em!" [Name], you're riding the signal for A box—[Name], you're backup! I'm signal for B box, [Name] is backup! [Name] for C box, [Name] is backup!" [Note to gamemaster: This means kicking the crate of gear out the hatch and riding it down as far as you can, then letting go and radio-triggering the bolts that blow the parachutes open.]

As you give each other the final run-down, Heartbreaker walks the line. You move to the boxes, feeling the weight of the Pintos and gear inside as you test them.

"Okay, this City of God is gonna have some new occupants. [Number of team members] bad motherfraggers are gonna knock on their door and see who's the real king of the mountain. I don't care if it's Santa Claus's fragging workshop or Lofwyr's dragon hoard! We're more evil than Satan and better armed than God *or* Ares! Damien Knight'd nuke the motherfragger from orbit. Well, nukes won't scratch this place, so they sent us! We're gonna make our own man-made volcano and roast marshmallows on the lava. Do you scan? Now remember, on the way down link up with your teammates. We don't want to spend extra time searching for little lost sheep when we got serious hoop to kick."

The C-260 bucks as it hits the fringe of the storm. Time to put up or shut up. Heartbreaker yells, "GO!" and hits a button on the Battletac. With a rumble, the ramp rips open. Beneath it is nothing but a solid black, freezing layer of cloud.

You heave yourself into the abyss with a shout, going down, feeling no resistance for the first second. Then WHAM! The icy slipstream hits you like a passing truck. You can't feel much through this Ramboid outfit, but the wind spins you around like a microchip in a tornado.

If the character makes a successful Athletics (5) Test, read the following:

This isn't so hard, once you get the hang of it. You're falling through low clouds at terminal velocity, about to either become a good imitation of a crab smacked with a hammer or a mean machine ready to waste some bad guys. You check your altimeter and Battletac and watch the numbers spiral down.

SWOOSH! You're through the clouds. The land below you is white. You're coming down in the valley between who-knows-how-many mountains, over the Kuskokwim river.

When the characters land, read the following:

Outside the storm? Did she say *outside* the storm? You don't know where Wonder Woman comes from, but back home you call this stuff sleet. You adjust the cells of the chute for landing, doing 60 kph sideways—you're bracing yourself for the scrape when your feet touch ice. It's one nasty, skating roll, but the armor turns it into a bruise machine instead of serious hurt. You come to a stop and grab your senses back from the edge of blackness. Your tac display shows you that the rest of the team is relatively close—but the blip for the snowmobile and gear is already half a klick away.

HOOKS

Machismo up the hoop.

The storm comes up unnaturally quickly, turning a clear "day" into a whirlwind of freezing rain. The jump is terrifying, going through a blizzard into an unknown area klicks away from the real destination. By the time the characters figure out they've lost half their gear, fear and adrenaline are running high—and they haven't even made contact yet.

By the way, UCAS soldiers yell "Tyee" or "Coyote" rather than "Geronimo."

BEHIND THE SCENES

Flying from the UCAS or even Seattle to Alaska is a fair haul. The beginning hours are calm, even fun, but it's going to be a long time before the characters feel tranquil again. Both Wonder Woman and Heartbreaker are career military, with all the behavioral quirks that go with the territory. They're both talkative, chatting about the "excitement" of the upcoming job.

Then, just as the team may be getting complacent, they hit the storm clouds on the other side of the range. Read **Tell It To Them Straight** and don't give them much time to think. They have a clear choice—if they wait and try to get closer to the mountain, there's a good chance the plane will crash. Even if it doesn't, they'll be taking the plunge from several thousand feet with a thin scrap of silk between them and one of the worst arctic blizzards on record.

Heartbreaker lives for this drek. He is manic, screaming half-inspirational and half-crazy speeches into the roaring wind as he prepares to jump. Everyone has his or her own gear in a personal backpack, but the big stuff—tents, extra clothing, communications gear and snowmobiles, are divided into A, B, and C crates that have chutes of their own.

The player characters only have a few minutes before the storm hits, and some of that will be spent on the wild ride down. The wind howls too loudly for them to hear each other without screaming; as each person jumps, he or she seems to be swallowed by the blackness. Thunder and lightning sound almost on top of each other, and the clouds are building so fast that they look almost solid under the body of the C-260.

The player characters went through similar scenarios during their extensive training, so they can convince themselves to jump without much trouble. If the characters are shadowrunners or don't have much parachuting experience, they must make Willpower (5) Tests in order to get up the nerve.

Once out of the plane, all characters make Athletics (5) Tests in order to steer while plunging through the absolute blackness of the cloud bank. The key is to steer toward other teammates and link up so that they all fall in the same area. If a player's test succeeds, he or she has gotten control of the chute and can steer effectively toward other teammates. Any player who fails the test can make a second one when coming out of the clouds. If both fail, the character opens the chute and has a good chance of landing, but the dynamics of the opening steer him or her off course. All the characters make an Athletics (5) Test (7 if they failed an earlier test) to pilot the chute and determine how close they land to one another. If this test fails, the character hits the ground hard; he or she must resist a 4S Stun and a 4S Physical wound using only Body. The boxes require no tests to land, but their chutes are blown open higher up and so they drift farther away.

The first thing noticeable is the darkness. The sun set about a month ago, and sunrise isn't scheduled until March. The ground below is trackless wilderness; that means no sign of people, streetlights, house lights or campfires. Even the stars are hidden by the storm. Treat the environment as Minimal Light. The Battletac system will show locator signals for the crates and the rest of the team.

Unfortunately for the player characters, the wind carried two of their three gear crates into the sides of the surrounding mountains. One held the snowmobiles and long-distance communications gear, the other tents and clothing. The food was divided between all the crates, so the loss of any will leave the characters short on rations. Again, they have little time to think— the heat signature on the remaining crate is fading rapidly as it sinks into the falling snow, while the other two crates have no signals whatsoever. The last known locales of the other crates place them very far apart. The player characters cannot hope to get all three and survive. The team must decide which is more important—the comm gear and snowmobiles or the tents. Sane characters should choose the tents.

The loss of the comm gear makes the mission more exciting. Without the ability to contact their superiors, the characters must trust themselves to make the best choice for the UCAS. This also heightens the suspense involved in getting to the mountain—only by getting inside can they hope to ever talk with home again.

Once the characters salvage what they can of their gear, it's time to camp for the night. Walking through the storm is stupid—they can't even *see* the mountain right now, and the wind is getting fiercer every minute. The storm lasts for 1D6 hours; the air gets steadily colder, and the wind is so loud that sleep is difficult. It is sleeting too hard to build a fire outside, and making one in a

tent means potentially conspicuous (and uncomfortable) smoke. Emphasize how dark it is, how huge and empty; the wind can blow straight across the land for hundreds of miles without encountering a single tree or building.

If a magician character checks out astral space, he or she finds it as dark and empty as the real world. Nothing lives here. The only living auras for as far as the magician can see are those of his teammates, and they look like tiny candle flames in the darkness. The magician has most likely never encountered an environment quite like this before. Almost everywhere on the planet some life exists, but here there is nothing—no trees, no animals. Even the living earth is buried under several feet of lifeless snow.

ENOUGH TO DRIVE A MAN MAD

Gamemasters should begin making secret Willpower (5) Tests for all characters after they camp. These tests represent the strain of being in a place with no light and no sound except the howling wind. Anyone whose test fails—in this case, 1 or 0 successes—begins to go a bit nutty. Make these tests every 8 hours of game time and keep track of whose tests failed. One failed test gives the character freaky dreams (make up nightmares appropriate to the characters' backgrounds). Two failures gives the character the same dreams, but as waking visions (hallucinations). If any character took the Amnesia or Flashback Flaw, then the Target Number for the Willpower Test goes up to 7. For dwarf and troll characters, who are accustomed to seeing things thermographically, reduce the Target Number to 4. The hallucinations stop after a character spends 24 hours out of the barren terrain. Yes, the hallucinations can continue while the characters are in Fort Ross. The dreams continue for D6 weeks. The implications of those hallucinations and when they occur is strictly up to the gamemaster.

DEBUGGING

This encounter should be difficult enough to scare the drek out of players, but it is meant to build suspense, not get anyone severely injured or killed. Unless a character critically fails the Athletics Tests, he or she will make it to the ground in one piece, albeit a bit shaken up. Any character who doesn't jump is pushed out by Heartbreaker or Wonder Woman. And no, they can't abort the mission; where could the plane possibly land?

The biggest potential danger is getting the packages. If the characters decide to rescue the comm gear and the snowmobiles rather than the tents, they set themselves up for a bad time. They suffer 6M physical damage for every 8 hours they spend outside, 6S if they are not moving. Trying to camp without a tent in the middle of an arctic winter is a bad idea. Any group that chooses to go for the snowmobiles and comm gear is probably planning to ride non-stop until they get to the mountain. That's fine—but raise the target numbers of those Willpower Tests by 2 to reflect the lack of sleep.

If the characters cannot get to any of the crates, they get the worst of both worlds. They have no comm gear, no snowmobiles, and no food or tents. This makes the adventure very unpleasant, so fudge the dice rolls or circumstances if necessary.

After the landing, go to **Winter Wonderland.**

WINTER WONDERLAND

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

You wake with a shiver that shakes your body out of sleep. The cold is like a living thing, wrapping itself around you. Discovery Trid says cold is just the absence of heat and can't radiate, but they've obviously never been here, because you can feel freezing waves coming off of everything around you.

You struggle out of your sleeping bag and open the tent a crack. It's lighter outside, but only enough to exaggerate the emptiness of the land. The storm is over and you can see the stars. Their distant glimmer shows the flat white sameness around you, and the brooding shape of the mountain an unfathomable distance away.

After the characters break camp and head toward the mountain, read the following:

The soft *thwuck, thwuck* of your snowshoes has become the metronome that marks time. Is the mountain getting closer? Who can tell? There's nothing to compare it to. It seems to be expanding to fill the horizon, but you're not sure you can trust appearances anymore. You blink to clear your eyes.

Wait ... what's that up ahead?

When the characters find the first body, read the following:

Something's lying in the snow. It's not moving. Your mind tries to focus—you need to concentrate. As you walk toward it, the shape becomes clearer. It looks like a boot, a military boot. Like the one you're wearing ... but that's impossible ... .

After the characters leave the bodies, read the following:

There but for the grace of God go you. You don't know what's more upsetting—seeing other soldiers dead in this wasteland, or the fact that no one said you were the second team of sacrificial lambs. All you know is that you don't want to spend any more time in this hell than necessary. You gaze at the mountain and realize with a small shudder that getting in there is your only chance to ever see home again.

But you need to make camp soon, maybe somewhere over that next ridge. You definitely don't want to end up as just another bunch of military popsicles.

When the girls appear, read the following:

You open your eyes to another Arctic night, unsure what woke you. Then it comes again—a soft whispering, like a child's voice. The air shimmers in front of you and then parts like the chrysalis of an enormous butterfly. But the wings that break through are white, feathered, and they glow from the inside. A body fades in—a young girl, with skin almost as pale as the snow, dressed in a filmy white gown that wraps around her legs. Her face has an ageless beauty to it, and her dark eyes and hair only accent her angelic appearance.

That's what she is—an angel. Standing right in front of you, complete with a halo of golden light that shimmers above her forehead. A heartbeat later, two more angels join her. The first

angel looks down at you with concern and says in a sweet, clear alto voice, "We can help you."

"No," says the third. She's taller than the others, with dark gold hair that falls in an even line across her shoulders. "We can't." And she begins to fade. The second follows, and then the first. As she fades away, her dark eyes seem to hold all the sadness of the world in them.

You breathe again, slightly surprised to find that you can. Was that real, or were you dreaming?

HOOKS

For the first time the bad guy is not some corporate military goon or a fragged-up shadowrunner, but the wilderness itself. Play up Mother Earth as the villain here, seeking vengeance against the scum known as humanity. The characters are slogging through snow in a featureless landscape with no sun or anything else to mark the passage of time or distance. No matter how long they walk, the mountain seems as far away as ever. This is where the hallucinations really get going. When the girls appear, the player characters should seriously question their minds and senses.

BEHIND THE SCENES

It takes a long time to hike across the snow to the mountain. After a while the characters run out of things to say to each other, and everyone wants to conserve warmth by keeping quiet. For as long as your players will stand it, describe the emptiness and the dark and how crazy it drives their characters.

The characters make periodic Perception (6) Tests to determine how much of the howling wind they are hearing. Each success adds 1 to the Target Number of the periodic Willpower Tests. By the end of the day, everyone should be failing those. It's going to be a long night.

After a while, the characters make a Perception (8) Test (lower the number to 3 if perceiving astrally). Anyone whose test succeeds sees a black boot sticking out of the snow. Digging reveals four bodies, two humans and two orks. The corpses are the remains of an Army Ranger team sent by the UCAS Department of Defense on a prior exploratory mission. The Rangers were dropped closer to the foot of the mountain, and took off toward it without their gear when a blizzard hit. Their tents had been blown away, and they froze to death.

The soldiers can be identified through plastic-coated dog tags. They dropped most of their gear in panic when the storm struck, but the team can find a couple of Manhunters and Colt M22a2s with all clips expended, plus a few bars of high-protein food. The soldiers' clothing is frozen to their bodies and will not be worth taking.

As the characters near the end of a day of walking, the mountain starts to look attainable. Then they see a large shape in the snow. Closer inspection reveals an overturned GMC Banshee panzer.

The panzer was on its way back from the mountain after dropping off food when it got caught in the same storm the characters did. Have the characters make Strength (8) Tests to wedge their way into the panzer by shoving apart the ripped metal and wads of snow. Inside, they find the rigger—an Anglo male whose wallet identifies him as Casey Green. He has little on him except for a certified credstick for 5,000 nuyen. The char-

acters can figure out that Casey just got paid, and that he was flying *away* from the mountain.

The body of the T-bird is filled with garbage, packed in tightly sealed bags but still smelly. The garbage makes a great insulator, and the inside of the T-bird is considerably warmer than the outdoors. Despite the perfume, the panzer is a good place to spend the night. If the characters decide to stay, wait until most of them go to sleep before reading the second part of **Tell It To Them Straight.** If they decide to press on, read it before they leave.

The angels are the astral forms of three good-behavior Beta girls from the City of God. They were sent out to see if Casey made it back. When they see a bunch of unfamiliar auras, one of the girls fades in from astral space, wanting to help. The other two follow. The oldest of the girls remembers that they must not talk to anyone outside, and shushes the other before they all fade.

Don't mention astral space. Let the players come up with that answer on their own. For now, let them think the angels are just another hallucination. If a magician character astrally perceives them, the angels have a strong astral presence that looks like some unknown paranormal phenomenon. An initiated mage can attempt to penetrate the girls' Masking; if he or she succeeds, the magician finds out that the angels are actually the astral forms of human mages.

If the girls see anyone in astral space, they immediately return to their bodies in the mountain. They all have Magic Attributes 2 higher than that of any player-character magician, so the magician cannot chase them. A mage can follow them long enough to determine where they are headed, but will lose track of them shortly afterward. If someone does manage to follow them, the girls throw spells to occupy the mage and then escape in the confusion.

Don't worry if no one finds out what they are. This whole encounter is supposed to be surreal.

DEBUGGING

The challenge in this encounter is to keep the players from becoming as bored as their characters must be. Emphasize the hallucinations and the surreal nature of the trip. If the player characters fail their Perception Tests to find the first dead soldier, have a player character look down and see a face peeking through the snow at him or her. Even the crashed Thunderbird should seem like a mirage at first. Half frozen and sticking out of the snow, it should resemble some ancient dinosaur, as out of place as anything the player characters have ever seen. By the time the girls appear, the player characters should be questioning their sanity.

The only real problem occurs if the characters attack the girls in astral space. The girls have been warned not to interact with anyone, so they flee at the first sign of aggression. Heartbreaker will try to stop any mage from going after the girls. He will remind the player characters that they have no orders to harm anyone (yet) and that they have no idea who or what these girls are. Heartbreaker does not want to haul a lifeless meat body around, and threatens to leave it behind. That should scare the drek out of any mage.

The panzer is beyond repair. The characters can't put it back together and fly the frag out of there.

GO ON WITHOUT ME

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Now you're so close to the mountain that its massive size finally hits you. Maybe it isn't much compared to Mount Everest, but you weren't ordered to climb Everest lately. Its sides are mostly bare rock; the dry snow has settled in huge drifts around the mountain's foot. You see no sign of human habitation—if you hadn't found the panzer, you'd swear you had the wrong mountain.

If the characters go to the main entrance, read the following:

The huge single door somehow manages to look impressive as hell while being almost impossible to spot. Concealed between heaps of snow and a precarious overhang, it's all but invisible from the air. The gray metal of the door blends perfectly with the surrounding rock, keeping it hidden unless you look carefully. You can just see a fence, mostly covered by snow, cordoning off a flat area big enough to land a T-bird. You also see what look like two slim anti-aircraft guns beneath an arctic-camouflage net. And you really don't like the looks of the little white boxes on the fence posts.

Just about anything might be behind that door or under the snow. Whatever it is, it'll probably be designed to kill people like you.

If the characters follow the river and then go underwater, read the following:

Though the river has calmed down since the storm, it's still running fast. The dark water looks like black blood rushing through a gash in the ice. Thermographic scanning reinforces the blood image, turning the warmer water reddish-orange in a landscape of cold blue. Everybody into the pool ... .

Under the water, everything is freezing on thermal and moving on ultrasound. The tributary is narrow, maybe six meters across, with a fierce current. Swimming down it is like being poured into a big glass of Kota with too much ice.

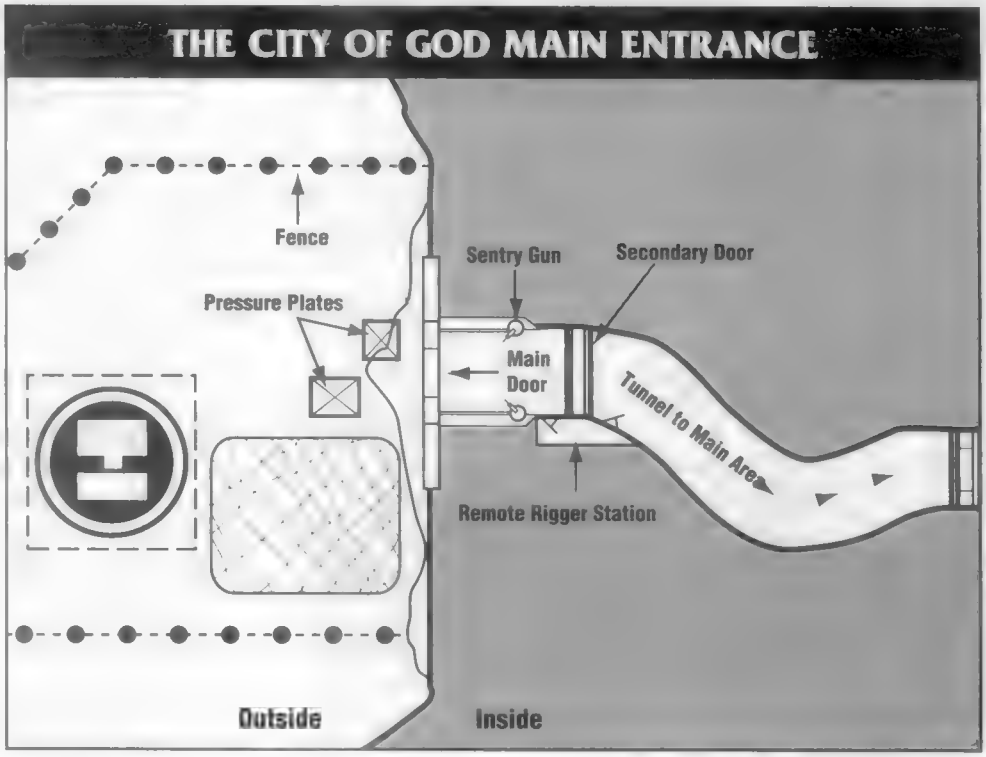
You head through, feeling the worn-smooth edges of the rock. Ten meters. Twenty. Fifty. A hundred and ten, with curves. Then the ultrasound picks up bad news. Something up ahead is obstructing the flow—or maybe helping it. It's a whirling propeller, and it takes up nearly the whole riverbed. Unless you slow down, you're gonna get chunked.

HOOKS

This is the action trid scene the players have been waiting for—actually going inside the mountain. The characters should have a tough time getting past the perimeter security; it's full of chokepoints designed to kill anyone who tries to break in.

Heartbreaker dies suddenly and unexpectedly. In addition to feeling sad, the characters should be terrified that they'll be next. They're soldiers, used to sudden death—but also used to life-and-

death reliance on the chain of command. Now they're on their own, cut off from home and with their leader dead. The discovery of the "true purpose" of the mission should come as a complete surprise—but the characters are good soldiers and will fulfill their mission. Honor and duty are as much a part of their lives as breathing, and they will obey orders or die trying.



BEHIND THE SCENES

Finally the team reaches the base of the mountain. Congratulations—they survived the arctic wilderness! But there's a lot more trouble ahead.

The first thing most teams will do is scout around physically and astrally. They can get inside through the main door or by going underwater (see p. 85 for underwater entrance).

THE MAIN DOOR

To walk around the mountain takes about half a day, during which all appropriate Body and Willpower tests continue. One success on a Perception (6) Test reveals a metallic gray glimmer in one of the tumbled-down areas. If the characters approach the glimmer, they find a blast door artfully concealed under low-hanging rock. Between the characters and the door lies a fifty-meter-square landing pad, but the four-meter-high fence around it sticks up at about chest height from the snowdrifts. The door is large enough to accommodate a minivan. If a magician attempts to go through the door astrally, he or she finds it impenetrable, but sees that it is glowing slightly. The door has been reinforced with biological material to keep the girls inside.

Motion and infrared sensors are mounted on the fence, the sides of the door, and in the ground right in front of it. A character can spot these by making a successful Perception (4) Test. An Electronics (5) or Computer Theory (4) test informs the player characters that these sensors will not detect their movement, since even a sleet storm would set the sensors off continually. As luck would have it, there's a sleet storm on the way; they occur pretty regularly in these parts. Weight-sensitive plates in front of the door sound alarms if a truck or APC tries to get through, but they won't register the weight of a few people.

The door has a Barrier Rating of 32 and is hooked up to a Rating 8 maglock. The walls around it are two-meter-thick rock (Barrier Rating 28). The characters are unlikely to succeed in muscling their way through—the walls or door might give after enough punishment, but the entire complex will be alerted and waiting by the time the characters break in. The characters' best bet is to use Electronics Skill and/or a maglock passkey (part of the equipment provided in Operation Backhand).

Even if the characters trigger no alarms beforehand, the door opening alerts the rigger currently on duty in the outer defense rigger station. The rigger tries to handle things himself before alerting the rest of the complex, confident that he is sufficiently protected by the door to his station (cut from the tunnel walls, the door also has a Barrier Rating of 28). For his statistics use the Rigger archetype (p. 59, **SRII**), but change the Etiquette Concentration to Military and give him Security Systems 5.

The rigger lets the characters walk inside. When two of them are in—one of whom is Heartbreaker, who insists on taking point—he fires the two Sentry guns that he's aimed at the doorway. Heartbreaker buys it in the first blast. He doesn't even have time to make a dying speech. The characters closest to him instinctively dodge (no need to tell them that the recoil takes the shots over their heads). As soon as Heartbreaker falls, combat starts in earnest.

Characters can use Called Shots to kill the relatively small guns; the Sentry platforms have a Barrier Rating of 12 and use the rigger's Initiative. They have tripods for recoil and mount light machine guns loaded with APDS ammunition.

The entryway is soundproofed and cordoned off from the rest of the facility. This rigger was the only one of the base's personnel assigned to monitor the base's outer defenses, so if the characters dispose of him early they have a good chance of getting deeper in without alerting anyone. The rigger's body will be discovered in 1D6 hours, when the next rigger arrives to relieve him.

Once the characters have gotten past the guns, go to **Tunnel Visions,** p. 85.

THE UNDERWATER ENTRANCE

If the characters opted to bring insulated SCUBA gear, they may use the entrance under the Kuskokwim River. The entrance is

only noticeable during a perimeter sweep if the characters specifically mention that they are looking underwater. A successful Perception (4) Test reveals an opening into the mountain; 2 successes on this test show the remnants of a huge door. The underwater entrance was originally the main entrance to the base, and is only underwater because the river has changed its course since the entrance was built. Even cursory observations show that the area is abandoned. Astral examination shows a submerged tunnel beyond the door, then a propulsion fan that splits into a filtering system on one side and a sealed-off grotto on the other.

Fenmore considered this part of the base too corroded and broken down to bother with when he remodeled the place. Figuring that no one could break in through the freezing river, he kept security minimal. The characters will therefore face only one Sentry gun (Intelligence 6, 15 + 1D6 Initiative, Barrier Rating 12, 6 points of recoil compensation and a light machine gun with APDS ammo) set up behind the sealed wall of the grotto.

When swimming in, characters must make Athletics (5) Tests to control their speed in the current. As described in **Tell It To Them Straight,** they must pass a huge underwater propeller that brings fresh water into the complex before they reach a spot where they can pull themselves out of the river. They must make Athletics (7) Tests to evade the propeller or take 8S damage from the whirling blades. Stopping the blades sets off a minor system alert. Bypassing this alarm requires a microtronics toolkit and a successful Electronics (5) Test.

Once the characters pass the propeller, they can pull themselves out of the river onto a ledge a meter and half above the surface. This feat requires 2 successes on a Strength (9) Test; 2 successes on a Strength (Body) Test allows a character to stand on the ledge and pull others up. Breaking through the rubble to the other side is easy, but the Sentry gun fires at the first motion in the area. The characters cannot sneak past; this gun should kill Heartbreaker in the same manner as the guns at the main entrance.

If Heartbreaker somehow miraculously survives, it's fairly easy to kill him in the subsequent obstacle course (see **Tunnel Visions,** p. 85). No one except Fenmore and his cronies has been to Fort Ross for more than thirty years, during which multiple floods, earthquakes and cycles of freezing and thawing took place. In other words, the base is a mess. Walls collapsed, ceilings fell in, fissures opened in the ground and new walls formed from piles of rubble. This area originally housed the containment labs of the old U.S. base, and so the characters should see almost-faded DANGER: RADIOACTIVITY signs all over the place. The City of God uses an area nearby as a boiler room/water purification center, but nothing (meta)human can squeeze into it from the outside.

HEARTBREAKER'S DEATH

The security measures around each entrance were designed by the U.S. and UCAS militaries, and have since been improved upon by a paranoid recluse whose existence depends on his fortress remaining impenetrable. This means that the characters *will* get hurt in this encounter. Fortunately, they have a short breather at the beginning of **Tunnel Visions** to use medkits and Heal spells.

Heartbreaker is not so lucky. Regardless of which way the team comes in, he is in the lead. If you want to make it more dramatic, have him give a brief speech just before heading in about how they have all survived the worst that Nature could throw at them and now it's time to take on the worst people can do. He is cautious and professional, yet confident; when he is gunned down seconds later, his confidence should seem bitterly ironic.

Make the scene dramatic and moving. Heartbreaker steps forward, looking indestructible; his suit of the UCAS's finest white body armor glows softly in the darkness. Just as he turns to give a few encouraging words to the characters, the sound of rapid fire rips the air and the pristine armor is riddled with holes through which dark blood drips slowly. Steam rises from Heartbreaker's body into the freezing air and condenses, as if they are watching his soul escape.

The characters are on their own now.

THE CLASSIFIED TRUTH

After Heartbreaker dies, the player characters will gather all his personal belongings from his body to return to his family and discover that he was carrying a small dossier . This folder holds half a dozen classified papers outlining their mission. The government has actually kept tabs on Colonel Fenmore since he left the army. They know of his association with Archangel Michael, and they know that he has turned this fort into some kind of base for his odd cult. However, they have no idea why. Even the government does not realize the extent to which the isolation of Fort Ross has made Fenmore a bigger megalomaniac than ever. The gamemaster can expand on the personal histories of Fenmore and the Archangel Michael (see **Cast of Shadows,** p. 93), as well as summarizing other attempts to infiltrate the complex. The documents seem to indicate that the UCAS military may have left Fenmore deliberately alone in order to discover what he meant to do before acting against him. In fact, it seems that information on Fort Ross was purposefully de-classified for Fenmore. The documentation includes words like City of God, Magical Apocalypse, Archangel and The Chosen. The player characters should start to worry at this point.

The most important thing the player characters discover is that Heartbreaker had orders to kill Fenmore and Archangel Michael. He was to secure Fort Ross and any experimentation going on within it, without damaging any property or harming any innocents. The dossier indicates that Fenmore was operating some kind of girls' school at the fort, but the military has no idea if that is a cover or the truth. If it turns out to be true, the military does not want the girls hurt.

If he or she wishes, the gamemaster can obscure the documents with bullet holes and blood so that the player characters never get the whole picture. This will leave them leaderless, hallucinating and completely confused.

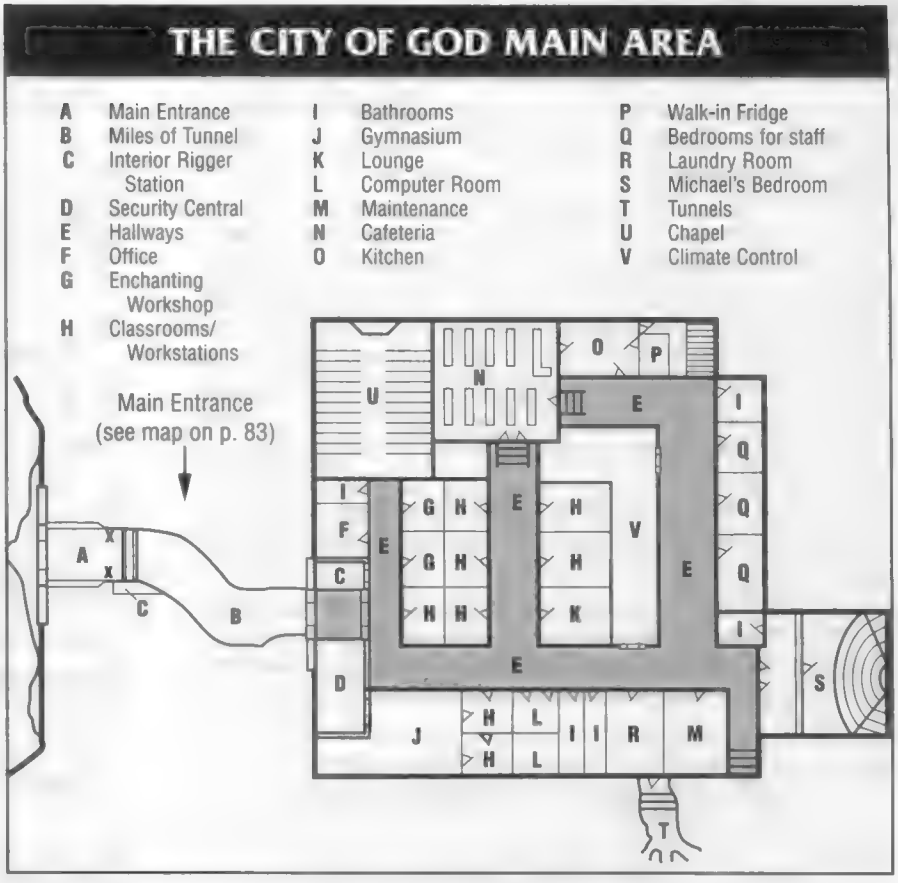
DEBUGGING

The characters may die in this encounter—war is like that. You can fudge and let them survive by the skin of their teeth, but don't make it easy. The characters are knocking on the City of God's door, and so should face tough opposition.

If the characters decide to go in with cannons blazing—say, by blowing down the door or walls—every armed person in the fort comes to confront them except for a token force that remains to

guard the younger girls (see **The Prophet's Warning, Lest Ye Be Judged,** and **Cast of Shadows** for statistics). This event will turn the entire adventure into a stand-up fight in which the characters will be overwhelmed, especially because Archangel Michael will call upon all 152 girls if things turn dire for the bad guys. He will declare that *this* fight is the Apocalypse, and their side must win. If the characters stay and fight the entire population of Fort Ross, they will most likely die. Even if they win the battle, they will be unlikely to receive a commendation from General Daly because they defied his direct orders to keep the entire mission quiet.

If they blow it but you don't want to kill them off, point out all the nooks and crannies they can hide in—places that are shielded astrally, an old trap door covered with gravel that leads to a safe hiding spot, and so on. With patience and good timing, the characters may yet be able to pull the mission out of the drekker.



TUNNEL VISIONS

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

You're really starting to hate these tunnels. You can't rid yourself of the feeling that all those tons of rock might come smashing down on your head any moment and crush you like an eggshell. Nothing like seeing your CO die before your eyes to make you morbid, eh?

Whoever created Fort Ross was either a psychopath or a military genius. This place was built to withstand nearly everything, from natural disasters to direct hits with dirty nukes. A madman could train up an army in here and no one would know ... and somebody may have done just that.

HOOKS

Make the exploration of the complex tense and frustrating. The characters wander through what seems like miles of empty tunnels, some well-maintained and some that are practically ruins. They know they are getting closer to ground zero, but they still haven't found anything to help them figure out what this place is—apart from Heartbreaker's secret dossier, which only succeeded in making them plenty nervous.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Run this encounter as a long nightmare of creeping through tunnels so narrow that the characters must walk single file, in total darkness filled with foul smells and creepy noises. Examples of events that might occur are:

• The characters encounter a puddle of oily, putrid chemicals. Anything touched by the chemicals begins to corrode. The characters must get over or around the puddle without touching it.

• The characters find a skeleton with a battered pair of dog tags around its neck. The dog tags are marked with a birth date of 1981.

• A boiling stream of waste water shoots out of a large pipe just as the characters pass it.

• A solid wall of rubble blocks the passageway. If the characters break through it, a stream of foul air comes out.

• The characters seem to be heading deeper into the mountain and the air keeps getting hotter, but the tunnels look older and more disused. Also, almost all noise has ceased.

• The characters stumble into a laboratory. The place looks as if someone just stepped out of it a minute ago, yet it's surrounded by rubble. If the characters make a successful Physical Sciences (5) Test, they can tell that the equipment in the lab is at least 30 years out of date.

• The floor in front of them suddenly drops away and Heartbreaker (if he miraculously survived the Sentry guns) takes a 20-meter dive.

Make up other events, as surreal or deadly as you like. The characters do not encounter anyone living, and they should wander around hopelessly lost for a long time. Eventually they find their way up to the inhabited areas, but let them think they'll be trapped forever—their global positioning system won't penetrate through this much rock.

Eventually, the characters will reach the main area of the complex. Once they do, what happens next depends on whether or not they are keeping quiet. They won't run into any soldiers or security people immediately, unless they do something to draw attention to themselves.

FORT ROSS LAYOUT

A. This is the front entrance (see **Go On Without Me,** p. 82). The two Xs mark the positions of the Sentry guns. The doorway just behind them is sealed with a Rating 6 maglock. The door and walls are reinforced with biological material so that astral forms cannot pass through them.

B. These are miles of mostly abandoned tunnels, either parts of the old base, service tunnels that Fenmore used when refurbishing, or natural passageways. Occasionally the characters come upon a room that has been used recently, which should encourage them to keep going. The traveled-looking paths all lead further inward and upward. The final door before the characters reach the inhabited area is locked with a Rating 6 maglock and covered in fungus that acts as an astral barrier.

C. This is the rigger station, locked with a Rating 4 maglock. Inside the room is a single computer terminal, a desk and other office accouterments. The alarm system may be triggered but not disabled from here. The walls on two sides are reinforced physically and biologically.

D. Security Central. This room is locked with a Rating 7 voiceprint identification system that requires a voice sample to bypass. Inside are five large computers and hook-ups to all the external security cameras and the alarm system. (Another security room upstairs covers the interior.) The characters can disable the alarms from here. The controls to the anti-aircraft railguns outside are lit up, and one wall is reinforced with biological material.

E. These are hallways in current use. The one to which the abandoned tunnels (B) first leads has a reinforced wall (Barrier Rating 24) that rises into the ceiling, permitting entrance to the classroom area. This wall can be raised from the rigger station or Security Central.

F. Several soldiers use this room as an office. Here, the characters can find evidence linking Mr. Mo—a decker who laundered most of the funds for this project—to the Volgograd Seven, corrupt Japanese military officers, organized crime figures in Detroit, many ripped-off banks and investors, and other sources of income and equipment. The entire back wall is covered with posted sheets of paper containing names, status (Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta or Epsilon), numbers and extremely strict class schedules. The classes include Hermetic Theory, Shamanic Theory, Manipulation Spells, Clean-up, Astral Practice, Military Tactics of the Sixth World and so on. All of the names are female first names, and run the gamut of nationalities from Native American to Anglo to Asian to African to Pacific Islander. No surnames are included.

G. These rooms are enchanting workshops. See **Santa's Workshop.**

H. These are classrooms with computer workstations. There are oversized religious icons on the wall of every room, and the only books are well-worn Bibles and prayer books. The entire place has a Background Count of 2 from frequent magic use.

I. These are bathrooms built to offer little privacy.

J. This gymnasium contains a climbing wall, padding for martial arts practice, and a wealth of practice weaponry, including padded sticks and guns loaded with simuslugs.

K. This lounge, furnished all in white, contains some Fenmore-approved simsense chips, an air hockey table and a few billiards tables. There are no trid sets or radios, but there are several strategy games as well as traditional games like jacks.

L. This is a computer room, used by the girls for word processing and games more than anything else. The computer includes an online, Rating 8 hermetic library.

M, N, O. Maintenance closet, cafeteria and kitchen, respectively.

P. A walk-in refrigerator, with a section for garbage sealed off from the first.

Q. Bedrooms for the kitchen staff.

R. Laundry room.

S. Archangel Michael's bedroom. See **The Prophet's Warning,** p. 87.

T. Ruins and the underwater entrance. See **Go On Without Me**.

U. This large chapel can seat 200.

V. Generator and boiler room. This room has a Rating 7 voiceprint identification system; the door has a Barrier Rating of 12. Two backup generators are in here along with the main generator.

DEBUGGING

If the characters make too much noise while exploring the main area, skip **Santa's Workshop** and go directly to **The Prophet's Warning,** p. 87.

SANTA'S WORKSHOP

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

A soft breeze, rich with the scent of herbs and incense, wafts out the door when you open it. The breeze strokes your face with warmth as you look inside the room.

Standing in front of Formica lab tables that would look more at home in a New Jersey high school than a secret military complex in TP-Aleut are four young girls. They wear Empire-style dresses, ankle-length garments of white silk that gather under their breasts and flow downward in long, smooth lines. Their hair is long and loose, and they look at you with wide, frightened eyes. It takes you a fraction of a second to notice that two of them have slim, pointed ears poking out from under their wispy hair.

You're at the North Pole for Christmas, chummer, and you've just run into Santa's elves.

The girl closest to you takes a startled step back. She shakes her head and pulls her arms close to her body. Her shoulders draw inward along her neck, fusing together as her body rapidly shrinks. Within two breaths of your arrival an ash-gray dove takes wing out of the neck of the white dress, which stays upright for a moment before collapsing into a limp pile of cloth. You tear your eyes from the bird and look for the other girls, but their dresses are empty too, and a flight of doves are cutting through the air with swift, sure wing strokes. The discarded dresses lie on the floor like empty shells, and you could swear you're hearing the beginning strains of *Deus Irae* from the four birds' throats.

HOOKS

Weirdness reigns. Don't give the players any explanation of what happened. The girls didn't "throw a shapechange spell," they just "turned into doves."

BEHIND THE SCENES

The characters are looking in on a hermetic shop class. These four "Beta" hermetic mages—Abigail, Wendy, Flora and Katrina—are attempting to enchant several fetishes in the shape of parchment scrolls.

All the girls in Fort Ross have been told that if they ever see anyone they don't recognize, they should immediately flee. The singing is the centering ritual that these four use to reduce the Drain of their Personal Physical Shapechange spells. For a full description of this spell, see **Picking Up the Pieces,** p. 92.

If the characters make the connection between these girls and the angel visions they saw earlier (**Winter Wonderland,** p. 80), confirm that the girls' outfits resemble those of the angels, but tell them that none of the girls look exactly like the angels. The girls will not respond to any attempts at communication, except by flying faster. If the characters overreact and shoot the birds, they fall, changing back into little girls (wearing only underwear and bleeding) on the way down. Scrutinizing the bodies reveals that they are two human and two elf girls between the ages of twelve and fourteen. A magician character can detect magical ability in their dissipating auras. Close physical examination reveals incision scars on their abdomens.

To catch the birds, a character must make a successful Unarmed Combat (5) Test, which the birds can dodge using 7 dice. Any bird caught turns back into a girl and immediately falls unconscious in the character's arms. At this point the child is astrally projecting, but don't mention that to the characters unless they think to ask. Magician characters can chase the birds down astrally and either kill or subdue them. Any girl caught and forced to talk will babble about the Archangel Michael.

Any girls who get away, either physically or astrally, alert the rest of the City of God to the presence of intruders. The characters have only a few minutes to look around before company arrives (**The Prophet's Warning**).

The classroom contains a lot of fetish and focus components and half-finished magical equipment. All of it uses Christian imagery—crosses and crucifixes, votive candles and stained-glass plates. Two lists are posted on the wall, one labeled Naughty and one labeled Nice; they contain the names of girls who have (Nice) or have not (Naughty) done well in their recent classes.

If the characters have time to look further down the hall, they can find a few more girls, but these react like the first four. They use all sorts of weird tactics to flee—casting spells to turn themselves into mist, become invisible, levitate, create illusions of splitting in half while the real girl runs off in a third direction, and similar special effects.

The girls' tactics are incomprehensible. They are being groomed for specific roles in magical battle, so each one seems to react in a random fashion, yet together they form the perfect force to combat an Awakened army. None of the younger girls know combat spells yet—those are reserved for Alpha students. If caught, they will cry and beg not to be handed over to the judgment of the Archangel.

DEBUGGING

If the characters catch a girl, she won't tell them anything intelligible. She considers her situation normal, so she won't explain anything or describe magic according to the usual Sixth World terminology. A typical explanation might go something like, "The Archangel Michael proclaimed to us as he watched from a great height, that should the touch of the sinful and wicked ever intrude upon us, we must reach for the spirit of the Lord and cloak ourselves in His power before returning as His messengers." In conventional Sixth-World terms, this means that Michael told them to use magic to protect themselves before running and telling him. The girls use Spell Defense liberally, though they don't call it by that name.

If the characters start killing the doves, they see the bodies of bleeding children. Besides suffering the guilt of harming innocent kids, they will also be reprimanded by Daly upon debriefing, and asked if the girls couldn't have been dealt with in any other way. The children are the "innocents" the military wants to protect, though the characters may legitimately wonder if the military wanted to save their lives or intends to use them for its own purposes.

THE PROPHET'S WARNING

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

You should have known better than to think you could get in and out quietly. From the heavy thudding noises coming down the hall, it sounds like they're throwing everyone they've got at you. The first few of them come into range, wearing white armor, rifles up and aimed straight at you. Just as you paste yourselves against the wall with your guns out, choir music rings from out of nowhere.

The singing swells to a crescendo; the air in front of you splits in two, parting around a sword that bursts into flame as it touches the air. The hands that follow the blade are attached to thickly muscled arms and a torso clothed in robes of gold that shimmer like liquid. Six wings unfurl behind this eerie figure; his white hair cascades down his back to touch the base of the first pair of wings.

"Repent!" he shouts. "Do not think to stand against the power of God Almighty, Who is my Lord and Master and Who trusts me alone to pass His judgment upon you!"

If the characters try to shoot the mysterious figure, read the following:

You let loose some hellfire of your own. You pull the trigger and watch as the bullets tear through the empty air and the wall behind the hovering angel. The smell of cordite reminds you of fire and brimstone.

The angel laughs and lifts his sword. "The spears of Satan cannot touch the Angel of the Lord!"

Great.

HOOKS

This encounter is as dramatic a battle as the characters will ever fight. The ground force is military, tough enough to give them a run for their money. The Archangel hovers above the conflict, impervious to almost anything the characters throw at him. Then they track him straight into the hands of the other angels, who smite them with God's Wrath against the backdrop of Heaven itself. 'Nuff said.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Thirty-three soldiers occupy the complex, most of them upstairs. The soldiers double as teachers and maintenance workers. Ten of them are magically active guards and instructors whose purpose is to protect the girls if combat breaks out (use the statistics given for Anael, p. 89, and add Teaching 5). Two are riggers and one is a decker; for their statistics, use the Decker and Rigger archetypes, pp. 51 and 59, **SRII.** Eleven soldiers maintain the base and teach various skills to the girls, five have received high-grade cybernetics, and four frequently communicate with the outside world on behalf of Fenmore. These four will back him up under almost any circumstances (see **Lest Ye Be Judged,** p. 90). Three are doctors; for their statistics, use the Street Doc contact (p. 211, **SRII**).

The characters may also face a hundred and fifty-two magically active girls between the ages of eleven and twenty. That number includes twenty-two physads, thirty-nine sorcery adepts, thirty hermetic mages, ten shamans, six shamanic adepts, five enchanting adepts, three air elemental adepts, five fire elemental adepts, seven earth elemental adepts, two water elemental adepts, six hermetic and seven shamanic conjuring adepts, and ten physical magicians. Like most people, the girls form cliques and subcultures and have wide individual differences. All of them, however, are gradually being conditioned to think of magic in Archangel Michael's way. Make up statistics for the girls: no two of them are alike.

Thirteen mundane guards, alerted by the escaping girls (**Santa's Workshop**) or by whatever ruckus the characters make, finally arrive in force. (The magical security staff are protecting the girls, as ordered to do during an emergency.) The guards work well as a team; they back each other up and do nasty stuff like aiming for the wounded so they can pick people off one at a time. They do not use grenades except as a last resort because Fenmore wants to avoid damaging or destroying the walls. The player characters, of course, have no such reservations.

Guards (13)

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	Armor
5	6	6	3	5	6	0.9	5	8/6

Initiative: 9 + 3D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 4/4
Skills: Armed Combat 4, Athletics 5, Car 3, Demolitions 5, Etiquette 4 [Military 6], Firearms 7, Firearms (B/R) 4, Gunnery 6, Leadership 3 [Military 5, Tactics 7], Military Theory 6 [Tactics 8], Stealth 4, Teaching 4, Throwing Weapons 4, Unarmed Combat 6
Cyberware: Cybereyes (w/Rangefinder, Thermographic and Flare Compensation), Headware Radio w/Comlink-IV and Crypto Circuit 3 , Smartgun Link 1, Wired Reflexes 2
Gear: Full Heavy Armor (8/6) with helmet, Ares Predator w/Smartlink [Heavy Pistol, SA, 9M, 15/clip, w/2 clips of APDS ammo], Colt M22a2 [Assault Rifle, 8M SA/BF/FA, 40/clip, Gas-Vent 1, Underbarrel Grenade Launcher and 3 clips of APDS ammo], Defensive HE grenades (15S, 6/mag), pocket Bible (under armor), Redstone Survival Knife

Archangel Michael, alerted at the same time as the guards, follows them astrally to the player characters. Everything about him is terrifying. Nothing can hurt him in this encounter. Bullets go straight through his astral form without a ripple. Spells must get through his sky-high shielding. If anyone goes after him in astral space, he throws up a Force 8 mana barrier. Describe everything about him as larger than life; instead of "casting a mana barrier," he "forms a protective sphere of God's light around himself."

Unless the characters are doing serious damage, Michael will be content to simply hover above the scene, exhorting them to repent or earn the wrath of the Flaming Sword of Vengeance. If the characters blow through the guards without a problem, Michael helps out by channeling "God's vengeance" through any active spell locks or foci the characters are carrying.

Once the characters finish off the ground forces (assuming they do), Michael returns to his body. The characters can easily track his astral form, because he is leading them into a trap.

Michael's body is in his bedroom, a huge auditorium-like chamber blanketed by a Quickened Landscape spell (see **Picking Up the Pieces,** p. 92) to make it look like Heaven. From the moment the characters step into the room, they will be walking on fluffy white clouds and surrounded by perfumed air, blue sky and choir music. The only piece of furniture in the room is a tremendous throne made of pure gold and etched with an ever-moving scene depicting the events of the Bible.

Michael is seated on the throne. His real form is covered by a Quickened Mask spell to look the same as his angelic astral form. He does not fight at first, but continues to rain sermons on the characters, trusting in his six Alphas to protect him. These six, the oldest, most loyal and best-trained of the girls in Fort Ross, are gathered around him in a loose semicircle. All six are human; Gabriel, Raphael and Samael are physical adepts, while Anael, Cassiel and Sachiel are hermetic mages and sorcery adepts. Brainwashed fanatics all, they believe absolutely that Michael is the archangel of the same name. As soon as the characters get near him, the Alphas attack. They are the Special Forces of the City of God—the characters had better hope that UCAS Special Forces training is a match for them.

Gabriel, Raphael and Samael

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	M	Armor
5	6	5	3	4	7	6	9	5	8/6

Initiative: Gabriel: 3D6 + 6, Samael and Raphael: 2D6 + 5
Initiatory Grade: 3
Threat/Professional Ratings: 5/4
Skills: Armed Combat 6 [Edged Weapons 8], Athletics 5,

Firearms 2, Leadership 3 [Military 5], Magical Theory 5, Military Theory 5 [Tactics 7], Stealth 4, Survival (Wilderness) 4, Unarmed Combat 6 [Wing Chun Kung Fu 8]
Physad Powers
Gabriel: Improved Ability [Armed Combat +2], Improved Physical Senses, [Flare Compensation, Hearing Damper, Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision], Increased Reaction 1, Increased Reflexes 2, Killing Hands S
Samael: Astral Perception, Improved Physical Senses [Enhanced Hearing, Enhanced Smell, Low-Light Vision], Increased Reflexes 1, Killing Hands S, Pain Resistance 6
Raphael: Distance Strike, Increased Reflexes 1, Improved Ability [Armed Combat +4, Athletics +2, Stealth +2, Unarmed Combat +4], Improved Physical Senses [Direction Sense, High Frequency Hearing, Thermographic Vision], Temperature Tolerance 2
Gear: God's Wrath (Power Foci 2; they can't use them, but Michael thinks they can), Longsword (Str +3/M, Rating 3 Weapon Foci), Full Heavy Armor (masked to look like angelic robes, halos and wings by a Fashion spell)

Anael, Cassiel and Sachiel (human hermetic magicians and sorcery adept)

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	M	R	Armor
4	5	3	5	6	7	6	7(9)	5	8/6

Initiative: 4D6 + 5
Initiatory Grade: 1
Threat/Professional Rating: 5/4
Skills: Armed Combat 3, Athletics 4, Conjuring* 4, Enchanting* 4, Leadership 5 [Military 7], Magical Theory 7, Military Theory 6 [Tactics 8], Singing 5, Sorcery 7, Stealth 3, Survival (Wilderness) 4, Theology 4, Unarmed Combat 3 [Wing Chun Kung Fu 5]
Spells: Analyze Truth 5, Barrier 4, Chaotic World 4, Compel Truth 5, Detect Enemies 5, Fashion 4, Flame Aura 4, Heal 5, Increase Reflexes +3 3, Invisibility 5, Light 3, Magic Fingers 4, Mana Barrier 6, Manabolt 6, Mind Probe 6, Personal Bullet Barrier 6, Personal Physical Shapechange 5**, Powerball 6, Shatter Armor 5, Stunbolt 5
Gear: Longsword (Str +3 M), Full Heavy Armor (masked to look like angelic robes and wings), God's Wrath (Level 2 Power Foci), Golden Halos (Spell Lock for Increase Reflexes spell)
*Cassiel does not have this skill.
For a description of this spell, see **Picking Up the Pieces, p. 92.

The girls are a scary combined-arms team; the mages throw the Shatter Armor spell (see **Picking Up the Pieces,** p. 93) to let the physads attack effectively. They hide behind Michael's anti-bullet barrier to combine its power with their personal barrier spells, and use Initiatory Shielding to avoid being scratched by spells. Michael watches and preaches encouragement, but does not interfere unless the girls are seriously hurt. Then Michael stops preaching and announces grandly that the characters have signed their souls over to Hell—to which he will personally escort them. Speech delivered, he attempts to smite them. At this point the characters should have few of the girls left to contend with, so they can concentrate most of their energies on Michael.

If confronted in melee combat, Michael loses his temper. His physical body underneath the Masking is weak and out of shape, and so he may fall quickly. If he has time to change tactics, he hell-blasts everything in sight until he falls.

When Michael dies, the Quickened Landscape spell collapses and the characters see the real room: an ordinary-looking space equipped with the standard amenities of a studio apartment and inexpensive furniture. But they only get a brief glimpse—go to **Lest Ye Be Judged,** p. 90.

DEBUGGING

The characters are soldiers, and they are taking on an army. Soldiers do die, but this should be a fun adventure for your players. If you need to fudge to keep their characters clinging to life, go ahead. This scene should make them cheer if they win, but if they don't win, they should have a good time losing. To help them out, suggest firing grenades—the girls have no Blast Barrier.

Power levels vary among player groups, but the seven "angels" should pose a difficult challenge for any group's characters. If the fight seems to be going too easily, adjust the girls' statistics or bump up their Threat Ratings by a die or two. Drag out the fight until the players begin to seriously doubt they can win, and then let them triumph in a dramatic final action.

If the characters surrender, either because they believe that Michael truly is an angel or because they are losing and would rather escape later, Michael will accept the gesture magnanimously. He will berate the characters for a while about the evil of their ways and then smile and bless them for having opened their eyes and hearts to the "true way of the Lord." They will be taken to separate, well-guarded, escape-resistant rooms in which they will be subjected to months of brainwashing techniques ranging from Control Thoughts and Emotions spells to propaganda to starvation and torture, until they become true believers. After they have proven that they are no longer a threat to the City of God, they will be allowed to teach the girls (after all, if they got this far, they must have valuable skills). They will also be castrated or sterilized in order to make sure that there will be no inconveniences such as children born of "the impure ones."

At some point, another UCAS Special Forces team will arrive, and most likely the player characters will end up fighting for the City of God against their own soldiers.

Finally, if the player characters have seen Heartbreaker's orders, it's decision time. Do they follow the confidential orders and off Michael, or do they keep him alive per their own instructions? Keeping him alive allows the military to use him and his "education" methods to keep the girls at the peak of their skills. Also, Michael created the four spells described in **Picking Up the Pieces;** some of the girls know them, but may not be able to teach them to anyone. (Whether to allow these spells to be used in their campaigns is up to each gamemaster.) Many of the spells and the way they are taught involve religious symbolism (see p. 105, **Awakenings**), and so the military might well be glad to watch Michael at work until they figure out how to duplicate his methods. At that point, of course, he becomes expendable. If the characters kill him, they were just following orders, which is more than

sufficient excuse in their superiors' eyes. They will receive commendations for either action.

LEST YE BE JUDGED

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

As the last shot rings out, the angel's body shimmers with a clear light. There is a soft popping noise, like quiet thunder, and the wings disappear. The halo of light disperses into the atmosphere, and the shining gold robes shrink to reveal an ugly yellow lab coat. The body shrinks and then expands, becoming a short, slightly overweight man with thinning brown hair. Was this what the whole show was about? The floor of the room is no longer made of clouds, just hard stone. The golden throne dwindles to a poorly upholstered desk chair.

The room trembles, and you hear the popping sound once more. The fallen body is obscured by a sheet of lava that washes in from all four walls, coating the floor with glistening liquid fire. A column of roaring flame shoots up from where you thought you saw the ghostly image of an unmade bed, sending a hot wave of sulfurous steam across your face. You cough and cover your eyes as the heat sucks them dry; the flickering lights of the fires threaten to blind normal and thermal vision. A soul-shaking voice booms from the ceiling: "You have fallen!"

"I hope you don't mind the theatrics ... but then, you just did kill the Archangel Michael," says a man who seems to have walked through the wall of fire. He's wearing a suit.

He smiles.

You recognize him. You've just found ex-UCAS Colonel Lawrence Fenmore.

Welcome to Hell.

HOOKS

The immediate switch from Heaven to Hell is disturbing, but the real hook in this scene is the change of tactics. Lawrence is more intelligent, more subtle and *much* saner than Michael. He is an evil, self-centered, manipulative, focused megalomaniac. He is also very good at getting what he wants. He tells the characters what he thinks they want to hear—whatever will give him the chance to bring his project to the "right people" in the UCAS military or to escape. If the characters take the time to talk to him, they should end up unsure if he's sold them the next atomic bomb or a three-legged horse.

As soon as they deal with Fenmore, the team makes the call to Daly to arrange for a pick up. Contrast the relief of spilling their story and being believed with the creepy feeling they get when the UCAS Army apparently accepts their bizarre account without question. They should feel even more unsettled if and when they discover the whole truth behind the operation. Plant a little seed of doubt that there are any good guys.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Fenmore, the brains behind the Fort Ross complex (see **Cast of Shadows,** p. 95) has been watching from a separate floor as his guards and girls ultimately fail to stop the player characters. His observations convince him that Michael has been putting too much emphasis on theology and his own needs, and not enough on creating an army. He decides that Michael's usefulness is over, and declines to interfere. Instead, he will deal personally with these dangerous invaders.

In fact, upon seeing how good the characters are, Fenmore acknowledges his own deep-seated desire to regain the respect of the UCAS military—or at least, those elements of it that he considers right and good. He views his girls as a resource rather than as people, so he cannot see why the UCAS rejected his militarily sound plan of raising the perfect magical army. He tries to negotiate with the characters in order to arrange a deal in which he continues to train the girls under the auspices of the UCAS military.

Because he initially wants to convince the characters that he is actually on their side, he tries to come across all sweetness and light:

"I'm Colonel Lawrence Fenmore, UCAS Army ... well, retired. I present an apology and a surrender." He looks disdainfully around the room. "I did not wish to judge my ally's idiosyncrasies too harshly, but I see they went further than I thought.

"I hope you haven't gotten the wrong idea. I've been busy with the administrative end, and haven't been on-site recently. I never planned all this craziness. I just wanted to give these poor girls a home and some use—born magical and completely rejected by their parents, poor things. What kind of life could they possibly have looked forward to?"

If the characters ask, Fenmore tells them that the girls all came from strictly religious families who rejected them because of their magic and sent them to his school to learn Christian-based magical training. If asked why the girls have so much military training, Fenmore will appeal to the characters' vanity by asking what better career these "poor lost souls" could have.

"When I proposed this plan to my superiors, years ago, they didn't believe it would work. So I chose to start up on my own. Now I see the UCAS is producing better-trained and more intelligent soldiers than they were in my day; perhaps they'll make a better decision about my project as well. Shall we cease hostilities and discuss an agreement?"

Fenmore does not want the characters to ask their superiors about an agreement because he is sure they will order him "neutralized." If the characters agree to anything in the name of the UCAS, Fenmore knows that their superiors will at least look it over, which gives him time to think and perhaps escape.

He wants to be allowed to continue the project in this location, with the UCAS providing additional security if necessary but not harassing him or any of his "staff." In return, he will train the girls for use in the UCAS military, will allow soldiers on-site to supervise, and will share his plans with them. He will agree to some cosmetic tweaking if pressed, but will allow no real changes.

If the characters won't negotiate, Fenmore signals his waiting friends. In this final mop-up combat, the characters fight people like themselves—military, gun-oriented and sane. The fight is nasty, but the psycho-magical assault is over. If the player characters try to kill Fenmore but fail, he will have one of his friends give him a weapon—either the Colt or the Ares Predator. He does not have a Smartlink.

Fenmore's Friends (4)

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	Armor
5	6 (8)	6 (8)	3	5	6	0.9	5 (10)	9/8

Initiative: 10 + 3D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 4/4
Body Index: 3.9
Skills: Armed Combat 4, Athletics 5, Car 3, Demolitions 5, Etiquette 5 [Military 7], Firearms 7, Firearms (B/R) 4, Gunnery 6, Leadership 4 [Military 6, Tactics 8], Military Theory 6 [Strategy 8], Unarmed Combat 6, Throwing Weapons 4
Cyberware: Cyberears (w/Hearing Amplification and Damper) Cybereyes (w/Rangefinder, Thermographic and Flare Compensation), Headware Radio w/Comlink-IV and Crypto Circuit 3, Smartgun Link 1, Wired Reflexes 2
Bioware: Enhanced Articulation (+1 die to all physical skills), Muscle Augmentation 2, Orthoskin 3, Trauma Damper
Gear: Full Heavy Armor (8/6) with helmet, Ares Predator [Heavy Pistol, SA, 9M, 15/clip, w/Smartlink and 2 clips of APDS ammo], Colt M22a2 [Assault Rifle, SA/BF/FA, 40/clip, w/Smartlink 1, Gas-Vent 1, Underbarrel Grenade Launcher and 3 clips of APDS ammo], Defensive Grenades (HE, 15S, 6/mag), pocket Bible (under armor), Redstone Survival Knife

Once Fenmore is defeated, the characters face no more opposition. The girls have a wide array of spells for self-protection, but are largely trained to run, not fight. The teachers and guards realize that they're outclassed. None of them will be happy about the characters' interference, but they won't make serious trouble.

The team can either call home immediately or search the rest of the facility for more complete records of exactly what has been going on. (If they read Heartbreaker's secret dossier, they will likely be inclined to go over the place with a fine-toothed comb.) If they search, they find records indicating that the project is six years old, and that the girls are of every metatype and come from all over the world. The staff are all human. No records exist of the girls' parents, and most of them don't remember their parents if asked. Talking to the girls reveals serious psychological trauma—though the actual spells controlling them fade with Archangel Michael's death, none of the children recall anything other than hazy dreams about their previous lives. Most of them are genuinely sad at the deaths of Michael and Fenmore, as the two men were father figures in the only world the girls knew.

A physical examination or a thorough search of the girls' medical records reveals that every one of them has been sterilized. Computerized records and plans, as well as Michael's and Fenmore's personal journals, talk about how magic spreads "the cancer" to the unborn. The gist of the records is that by kidnapping the girls, Fenmore and his cronies were protecting society from them, as well as protecting them from themselves. Fenmore planned to use his magical army against magically powerful Sixth World nations, primarily the Tir nations and Aztlan. The characters can also find an extensive library of military tactics, focusing on legendary magical battles and such modern magical battles as Redding.

When the player characters call Daly, he expects a short report; he'll give them a thorough debriefing later. He'll send people up to verify everything they say, so it doesn't matter if he believes them right away. He will not act skeptical of or surprised by anything they tell him. He thanks them for a job well done and assures them that a LAV will pick them up in a few hours. If they ask what happens next, he will pull rank on them, telling them that the ultimate decision on what to do with the army of magical children is up to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. All the characters need to know is that the girls will be "taken care of" by the UCAS military.

The characters can say little to change the military's plan to use the girls. More than a hundred psychologically malleable mages represent too great an opportunity to pass up. If the characters somehow ruin the girls' usefulness (drive them crazy, kill them, send them out into the storms), they get to spend a long time in a small room explaining why they chose to waste the military's valuable assets.

DEBUGGING

Once again, it's decision time. The player characters may kill Fenmore before he makes his proposal. If so, they go next to the communications room and call in for pick-up. The UCAS generals consider the team's recommendations, but will not give the characters any real power. If the characters do not kill Fenmore outright, he uses whatever time he has to come up with a way to present his plan favorably to the UCAS brass, or to escape with as many girls as possible.

Fenmore's friends will attack the characters even if the characters kill Fenmore, but if their leader is dead they will not fight to the death; to reflect this, reduce their Professional Ratings to 2. If one of them dies, the other three will either try to escape or give up, at the gamemaster's discretion.

The characters are unlikely to negotiate with Fenmore. They've just been dragged through the Arctic wasteland, almost killed by a bunch of little girls singing Hallelujah, and are now standing in Hell discussing boarding-school plans with a nutso colonel gone AWOL. Ten to one, they'll just want to get it over with. However, if the fight starts going badly they may feel they have a better chance if they negotiate (at least the bullets will stop flying). They can either let their superiors deal with it later or choose a time to end this freak show in their own way.

If the characters fight and subdue Fenmore, he will try to stay calm and keep talking. He will also continually try to escape custody. Once he is turned over to the UCAS authorities, he may escape and become an Enemy for the characters if the gamemaster so desires; see **Picking Up the Pieces,** p. 92.

PICKING UP THE PIECES

DOES ANYONE BELIEVE YOU?

The UCAS military brass are practical people, and they have been recording paranormal data since 2030. Not much about magic surprises them. They also remember Lawrence Fenmore (Daly's superiors have a file on him thick enough to prop open heavy doors), and know that kidnapping little girls is exactly the sort of thing he would try.

The characters are cautioned that the mission remains top-secret and should not be discussed with anyone except Daly and Daly's superiors. If anyone finds out anything that might lead to awkward questions, the characters have a cover story: they were helping Quebecois refugees resettle in the UCAS. If they do tell anyone the truth, most people will think that the characters have gotten shot in the head a few too many times, so the military does not regard them as a serious enough security risk to do anything drastic (like having them fitted with cement overshoes and dropped in a large body of water).

The Joint Chiefs realize that Fenmore's girls are too valuable a resource to lose, or to risk under the supervision of any but their most highly-trained people. The girls' training continues as a black operation under the auspices of the UCAS military. These children are never given SINs, rights or a legal existence. The characters are taken off this job permanently so that they will never have "a need to know" about any of it. If the gamemaster wants to keep a plot thread open, he can have some of Fenmore's students escape at some future point, or establish some "friends of Fenmore" outside Fort Ross who will try to keep the madman's dream alive.

The UCAS military may decide that the girls are just too unreliable to be useful—their conditioning went deep, and many may not be able to withstand the "cleansing" necessary to become UCAS agents. Whether any make the transition is up to the gamemaster.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

The characters failed to keep their reconnaissance mission totally secret, but only because of circumstances beyond their control. Any character wounded on the mission is awarded a Purple Heart. If they managed to bring things to a neat close and avoid harming or killing any of the girls except the Alphas, they may receive Silver Stars. For any characters who were in line for a promotion when this operation began, successful resolution counts in their favor. One of them may well be promoted to Heartbreaker's position of team commander.

If the characters really botched the job—setting off alarms right away, fighting among themselves, killing girls needlessly—a black mark goes on their records. Their superiors are unlikely to send them on hush-hush missions again, and any promotions will be seriously delayed. Most of the team will be checked out psychologically by staff cleared for the information, and analyzed to see if they are dealing well with the stress of combat.

In either case, the characters receive hazard pay—their regular pay rate (p. 116, **SRComp**) times 3, multiplied by the number of days they spent on the mission.

AWARDING KARMA

Award individual Karma according to the standard rules (p. 199, **SRII**). In addition, characters who bring back evidence of the Rangers' deaths, figure out what Fenmore is up to and have him dropped in a federal prison or killed, jump in front of bullets for their teammates, pull the famous "go on without me" speech, or come up with a really cool penetration plan and execute it should get Karma. Award team Karma as listed below.

Making it through the HALO jump and reaching the mountain	1 point
Getting inside quietly	1 point
Survival/Threat	3 points
Removing Michael from the picture	1 point
Dealing with Fenmore	1 point for negotiating his capture or killing him
Not harming any of the girls (except the Alphas)	1 point

ENEMIES

If the characters leave Fenmore alive, he wants them hunted down and eliminated. His setup worked much better as a completely black operation, and most UCAS brass would find his ethics questionable even for an operation that doesn't exist. If at any point he manages to escape from the military or reach his contacts in various terrorist organizations, he will try to send someone after any characters whose faces he remembers well enough to describe them. Consider Fenmore a 4-point Enemy with Power 3, Motivation 5 and Knowledge 3. If the military ceases to keep him under surveillance at any time after his operation has been exposed, his Power increases; if he ever finds out their real names, his Knowledge increases. If the gamemaster wants to have one of Fenmore's flunkies survive and become the player characters' Enemy, the flunky is a 2-point Enemy with Power 1, Motivation 4 and Knowledge 1.

NEW SPELLS

As stated in **The Prophet's Warning** (see p. 87), the following spells were created by the Archangel Michael and are taught using religious terminology and geasa. The UCAS military might create these spells on its own through trial and error; if so, they may trickle down to agents like the player characters and even possibly to the street. Each gamemaster determines whether or not these spells can be used outside of this adventure.

Landscape

Landscape is a full-sensory, area-effect illusion spell similar to Trid Spectacle, except that it can be used on involuntary subjects.

Type: Mana **Range:** Limited **Target:** Willpower
Duration: Sustained **Drain:** (F/2) + 1D

Personal Physical Shapechange

This version of the Shapechange spell takes armor, clothing and a limited amount of equipment with it. The character can carry 1 item for every point of Force of the spell. Each article of clothing counts as one item. For every 2 successes, the character may carry 1 additional item, but the new form must be able to wear or carry the item. Armor does not protect the new form.

Type: Physical **Range:** Self **Target:** Body
Duration: Sustained **Drain:** (F/2) + 1M

Shatter Armor

Shatter Armor is an area-effect combat spell specifically designed to destroy personal armor (vehicles and walls are unaffected). The armor resists with its Object Resistance Rating.

Type: Physical **Range:** LOS **Target:** Object Resistance Table (usually 8)
Duration: Instant **Drain:** (F/2) + 1S **Base Damage Level:** D

Fire Touch

Fire Touch is a touch-delivered combat spell with the elemental effect of fire. Michael has anchored it to the blade of his sword, a separate piece from the highly insulated hilt, to create a flaming-sword effect.

Type: Physical **Range:** Touch **Target:** Body
Duration: Instant **Drain:** (F/2) S **Base Damage Level:** S

CAST OF SHADOWS

The following section describes non-player characters important to the story. The gamemaster can modify Heartbreaker's history as appropriate to fit the histories of his group's team.

JEFF "HEARTBREAKER" LISBON

Major Jeff "Heartbreaker" Lisbon grew up in Seattle's nouveau-elven district. The constant victim of brutal bullies during high school, Lisbon became a wild man to compensate. At age sixteen, he discovered his physical adept powers.

Upon graduation, he enrolled in the air-mobile infantry at Fort Lewis, where he found an ideal blend of cooperation and competition. He hatched schemes to smuggle "elven entertainment specialists" on base and indulged in several total-company-participation practical jokes. He soon became known as the man to see if you wanted something done.

His enthusiastic nature led him to specialized training in such military esoterica as EOD (explosive ordnance disposal), TA (thaumaturgic applications) and eventually to the Green Berets and Delta Force. His habit of constantly transferring out just as he was getting in the groove with a new team gave him his nickname.

Lisbon is a tall, Anglo elf with crew-cut dark brown hair. He is twenty-six years old.

Attributes

Body: 5	Intelligence: 4	Essense: 6
Quickness: 7 (8)	Willpower: 6	Magic: 8
Strength: 5	Charisma: 6	Reaction: 5 (6)

Initiative: 5 (6) + 1D6 (2D6)
Threat/Professional Rating: 8/4

Physical Adept Powers

Improved Physical Senses
- Enhanced Smell
- Flare Compensation

Improved Abilities
- Armed Combat 1
- Athletics 2
- Stealth 2

Improved Physical Attributes
- Quickness 1

Increased Reflexes 1
Killing Hands (M)
Pain Resistance 4
Spell Shroud 2

Skills

Armed Combat 4	Firearms: 6
[Edged Weapons 6]	Firearms (B/R): 3
Athletics 5 [Falling, 7]	Gunnery: 5
Car: 2	Military Theory 3 [Land 5, Tactics 7]
Demolitions: 3	Stealth: 5
Electronics: 3	Throwing Weapons: 3
Etiquette (Military): 4	Unarmed Combat: 6

Gear

See **Operation Backhand,** p. 76.

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

Michael Thorndike suffered through a severely abusive childhood that drove him to schizophrenia. An emotionally empty life, coupled with bad experiences in rigidly religious orphanages and his growing magical talents, sent him into a psychiatric hospital. He believed that he would one day emerge like a butterfly from his current incarnation and manifest as the Archangel Michael. In that time he would ascend to heaven to judge humankind on the Last Days. He bided his time in the institution until he finally chose to reveal his magical power in a frightening display of illusion and mind control that made the evening news.

Colonel Fenmore happened to be watching the trid that night, and decided to make Michael an offer. After studying him closely, Fenmore found that Michael was skilled at manipulating others, but was also naive and easily controllable through playing to his fantasies and desires. Among other flaky things, Michael believes that he bound Dunkelzahn ("the dragon that gives the SIN number of the beast") and threw him into a lake of fire for attempting to "rule over the whole Earth." (As Michael was nowhere near FDC at the time, he is dead wrong.)

Michael's immense charisma stems from his ability to accurately read people's emotions and desires, and his intimidating manner. He appears to be in control at all times; when defeated verbally or physically, he plays the martyr to the hilt. Without his archangel spell, he looks ordinary; he has short, wavy brown hair and an unkempt beard, but compulsively clean skin and clothing. In addition to his ugly yellow lab coat, he wears jeans, thermal underwear, a button-down shirt, a pullover sweater and synth-wool socks.

Attributes

Body: 3	Willpower: 9
Quickness: 3	Essence: 5
Strength: 4	Magic: 8
Charisma: 6	Reaction: 4
Intelligence: 5	

Initiative: 4 + 1D6 (28 + 1D6 astrally)
Threat/Professional Rating: 6/4
Initiatory Grade: 3

Skills

Armed Combat 3 [Edged Weapons 5]
Enchanting: 4
Leadership 6 [Religious 8]
Magical Theory 1 [Personal 7]
Negotiation 4 [Intimidation 6]
Singing 2 [Hymns 4, as a Centering skill]
Sorcery 6 [Spellcasting 8]
Theology 3 [Christian 5, Personal 7]
Unarmed Combat: 2

Spells

Combat
- Fire Touch: 5* (triggered by Detect Object; see below)
- Hellblast: 6

Detection
- Detect Bullets: 5*
- Detect Enemies: 5**
- Detect Object 3* (blood, Range: Touch)
- Detect Phrase: 4 ("City of God," for example)

Illusion
- Landscape: 4**
- Mask: 5**

Manipulation

Bullet Barrier: 7*	Mana Barrier: 8
Control Actions: 6	Mob Mind: 5
Control Emotions: 6**	Mob Mood: 5
Control Thoughts: 6**	Possession: 6

*Spells Anchored when the player characters arrive on the scene
**Spells Quickened when the player characters arrive on the scene

Gear

Longsword (Str + 3 [M], Reach +2) w/anchored Fire Touch spell and insulated hilt
God's Wrath copper bowl (Power Focus 2)
Lab coat (masked)

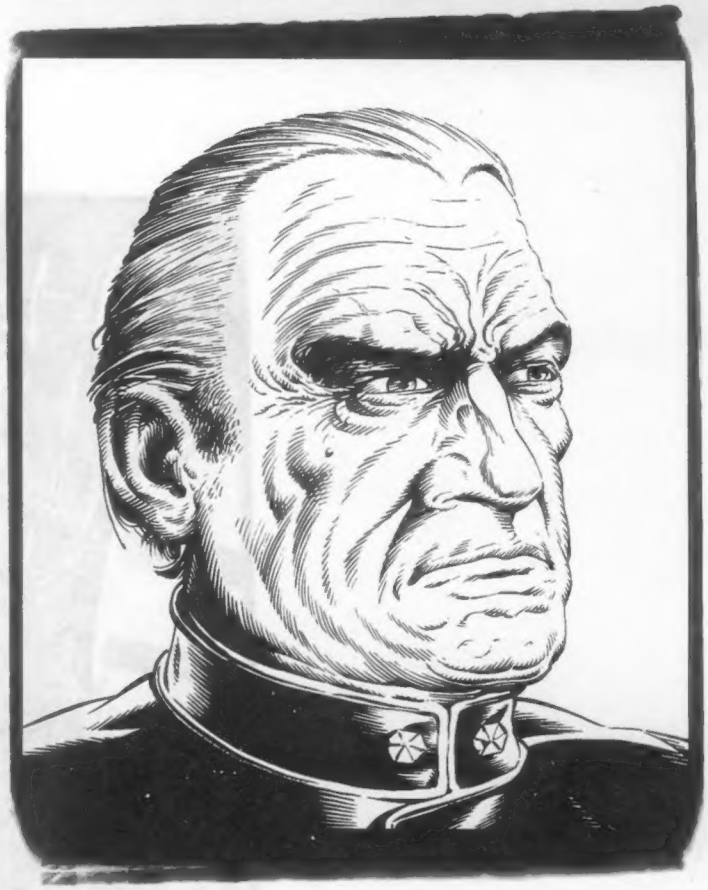
COLONEL LAWRENCE FENMORE

Lawrence Fenmore was working his way through college on the Army program when goblinization struck in 2021. In the national massing of manpower that followed, he got the shock of his life working restraint duty for orks and trolls in hospitals. Ever since that traumatic experience, Fenmore has tried to return to a time before the Awakening. The secession of Tir Tairngire only deepened his distrust of non-human metatypes—the newborn Tir's elven masters forced him and his family to leave their home in Oregon, and they were none too gentle about it. Fenmore has never gotten over the incident. Unlike most haters of metahumans, however, Fenmore does not harbor an equal distrust of magic. As he worked his way through the UCAS Army ranks and saw the secessions of the Tirs and the CAS, he came to the conclusion that magic was the next atomic bomb—an incredibly powerful threat to hold over those not fortunate enough to have any of their own.

In 2050, Fenmore's life fell apart. His wife left him, the UCAS military "betrayed" the country by contracting critical weapons systems out to Tir-owned Telestrian Industries (a stupid strategic decision), and he was passed over for a long-coveted promotion to brigadier general in favor of a dwarf. Fenmore's hate boiled over, and he soon found others in the military of like mind. He had spent the past few years toying with the idea of building a "magical army" to use against the UCAS's enemies (especially those that the UCAS top military brass were too blind to recognize), and he decided that the time had come to strike a blow for his nation. He looked for a place to hide while building his army, and providentially discovered the long-lost plans for Fort Ross. Needing money to finance his secret operation, he told a friend—a former UCAS military decker named "Mr. Mo"—to find him some. Fenmore then faked a medical condition and retired at the age of fifty-one to found the City of God.

Though he started out a conventionally religious young man, Fenmore gradually came to agree with those "spiritual" leaders who preached that the Awakening and all it had wrought (including metahumans) was the work of the Devil. Fenmore is far less overtly wacko on the subject than Michael, but he genuinely believes that he is turning evil to "the Lord's mysterious purposes" by kidnapping magically gifted children and making them into the ultimate weapon to defend "God's country, the UCAS" against the evil hordes of the Tir and Aztlan. He is not, however, clinically crazy, and can present himself as a rational man interested only in preserving national security. His distaste for Michael's religious-icon overkill is genuine, but he fostered it because it kept Michael happy and productive.

Fenmore demands the best from everyone around him; he even managed to condition his crazed magician ally into a spiritual leader rather than a wreck who could barely dress himself. He expects the characters to understand their position and negotiate with him like professionals. However, he hates to have his orders or wishes questioned. In his mind, he is always right. If anyone proves him wrong by out-arguing him, he burns for physical retribution.



Attributes

Body: 4	Intelligence: 5
Quickness: 4	Willpower: 5
Strength: 3	Essence: 5.3
Charisma: 5	Reaction: 4 + 1D6

Initiative: 4 + 1D6
Threat/Professional Rating: 4/3

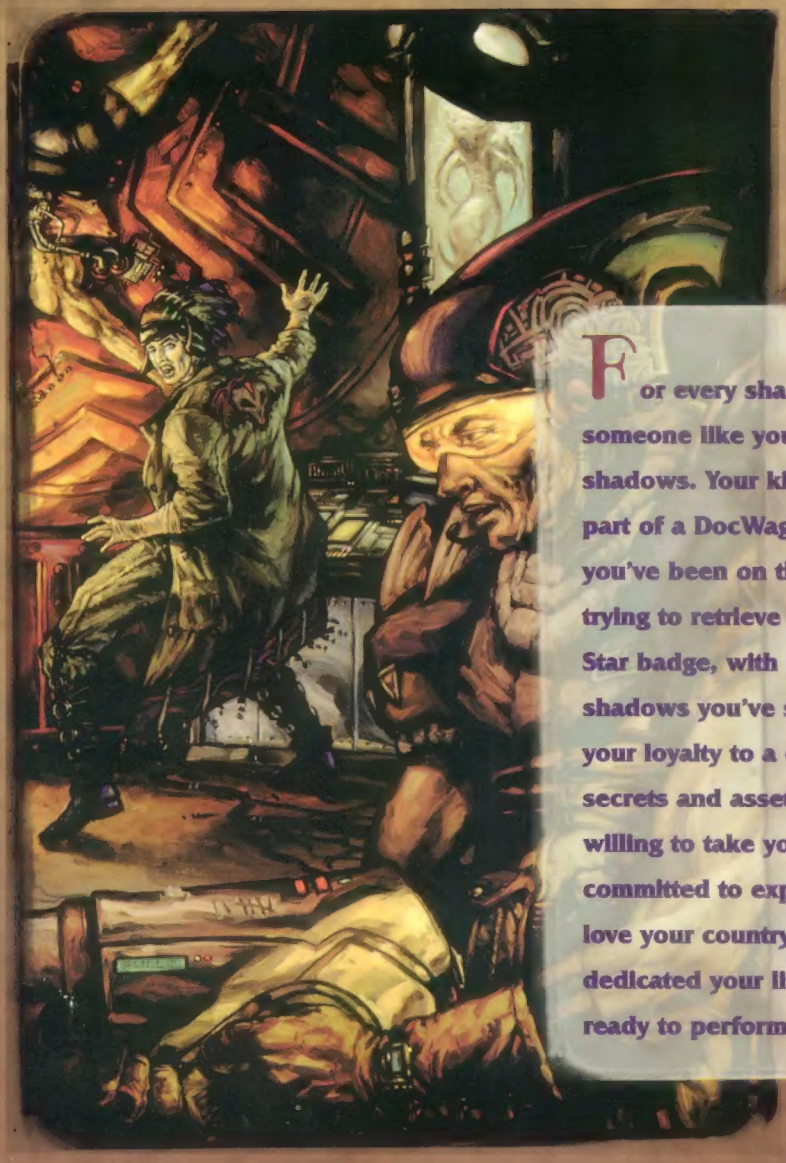
Cyberware
Datajack (at base of skull) w/50 Mp Headware Memory
Display Link
Tooth Compartment w/cyanide

Skills

Athletics: 4	Military Theory 6 [Strategy 8]
Car 2 [Passenger Vehicle 4]	Negotiation: 6
Etiquette 4 [Military 8]	Psychology 6 [Conditioning 9]
Firearms: 6	Sperethiel: 4
Interrogation 4 [Verbal 6]	Teaching: 4
Japanese: 3	Theology 2 [Judeo-Christian 6]
Leadership 5 [Military 7]	Unarmed Combat 2 [Wrestling 4]
Magical Theory: 5	

Gear
Form-Fitting Body Armor (Level 3, 4/1)
Light Pistol (at gamemaster's option)

FIN



SCUM GO ON SHADOWRUNS— YOU ACCEPT MISSIONS

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Missions is a collection of four Shadowrun adventures that allow players and gamemasters to experiment with the alternate campaigns presented in the Shadowrun Companion: Beyond the Shadows. In these adventures, the players can play a DocWagon High Threat Response team, Lone Star undercover police, corporate security agents, government commandos or even a media investigative team. Missions includes suggestions for translating these adventures into campaigns and for incorporating an existing shadowrun team into these adventures. Missions is intended for gamemasters and players of all experience levels. For use with Shadowrun.

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